MUSIC IN PORTSMOUTH 1789-1842

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Summary

The evidence of advertisements and reports in the local press from the late eighteenth century, especially in extant issues of the *Hampshire Chronicle* and the *Hampshire Telegraph*, suggests that Portsmouth, for more than two hundred years, has had a very lively musical scene. Detailed research into the first half of the nineteenth century has revealed the presence of a wealth of musical talent on Portsea Island, both among instrumentalists and singers, collectively and as soloists. Their public performances attracted enthusiastic and fashionable audiences from all over Hampshire. The unsung hero behind the organization of most of the concerts and festivals held in Portsmouth during this period was Stephen Sibly, a native of Salisbury, who was appointed organist at St John's chapel, Portsea, in 1789, and also at St Thomas's, Portsmouth in 1795. The visits of artistes of the calibre of Madame Catalani, Paganini, Strauss and Liszt indicate how favourable was Portsmouth's position in the itinerary of high-class performers. This pioneering study fills an important gap in the cultural history of the city and complements Nigel Surry's 'Art in a Dockyard Town: Portsmouth 1770-1845', *Portsmouth Paper* No. 59 (March 1992).

Foreword

Over many years Frank Warren carried out the research which forms the basis of this Paper. Unfortunately, ill health prevented him from writing up his material, and so Irwen Cockman has collaborated to collate and analyse the wealth of information available, and to write the published text. A copy of Mr Warren's research notes, amounting to more than 400,000 words, and covering not only Portsmouth but also the area from Lymington to Brighton, has been deposited in the Searchroom of the Portsmouth City Museum and Records Office for the benefit of all present and future students of music making in the area.

Cover:
St John's chapel, Prince George Street, Portsea, erected by subscription and consecrated 1789. Destroyed by bombs 1940.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service.

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Frank Warren
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Philosophers and writers about music since Plato, Aristotle and Boethius have praised it for its healing qualities, its value in drawing people together and, above all, its ability to uplift the soul of man. The extent of the music industry today certainly proves that music is important to the majority of people whether it be as entertainment, a means of excitement or a soothing background of sound. A touch of a switch and it is available to anyone at any time. But, of course, this has not always been the case.

In the pre-Victorian, pre-Dickensian Portsmouth of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the situation was very different. Music was not available to everyone. Most would experience it on the street as ballads sung by itinerant entertainers, or hear it through the open doors of taverns on boisterous pay-day evenings or played by military bands. Organized entertainment of any kind was out of the reach of the majority of the inhabitants. Behind the areas of fashionable residences was rampant poverty with its flowing filth, disease and raggedly-clad children. The price of a concert ticket (2-4 shillings) would have fed a small family for a week.

Enclosed within their respective ramparts on the south-west corner of Portsea Island, both Portsmouth and Portsea were profiting from the success of the dockyard, which had been growing fitfully but inexorably since it was given a substantial impetus by Henry VII in 1495. The need for naval ships and repair facilities during the wars against the Spanish and the French in the eighteenth century had caused the population of the area to grow quickly. The social and spiritual needs of the dockworkers and their families had to be catered for, a task primarily undertaken by the churches and chapels at that time. There had been a church on Portsea Island since *c.*1164 (St Mary's Portsea) and St Thomas's had been established in the newly founded Portsmouth town *c.*1180. Six hundred years or so later two other churches were built, also in quick succession, St George's in 1753 and St John's in 1787, both within a stone's throw of the dockyard, by then one of the greatest industrial enterprises in Europe. [1]

When a new organist was appointed to St John's chapel in Portsea in 1789, the town was poised for further rapid development in all its physical and social aspects. For a young man of twenty-four it must have been an exciting prospect to launch a new career in such an environment, and the evidence of the next fifty years proves that his musical imagination and organizing abilities were such that he was able to take advantage of the prosperity and increasingly fashionable milieu within the town. Stephen Sibly, the successful candidate, was up to the challenge.

Since Stephen Sibly's career spans the first half of the nineteenth century, and since his musical activities in Portsmouth were more prolific than those of any other musician, it is fitting that his life should be the principal theme of this Paper. Other personalities added much interest to the musical scene during this period, the majority of whom were British touring performers, but as travel became increasingly easier many artistes came from the continent, including such famous names as Haydn, Paganini, Strauss and Liszt. The information about the progress of music in Portsmouth is of necessity largely dependent on the extant copies of the *Hampshire Telegraph* and subject to editorial choice. There are years when there is no evidence that any concerts were staged in the town, but these were often periods of crisis during times of war, the events of which were more worthy of newspaper space than mere local concerts or visiting artistes.

The organ at St John's was built by George Pike England in 1789 and Stephen Sibly was its first organist. [2] He brought with him a strong church-based musical background instilled in him by his education at the Cathedral School in Salisbury and as a chorister there. This grounding proved invaluable as he set out to develop in Portsmouth the same kind of musical tradition that must have existed in his adopted town.

Stephen was born in Warminster to a Wiltshire farming family (see family tree p.24) in 1765 although the *British Musical Biography* states that he was a native of Salisbury and had been born there in 1766. [3] His parents, Norton Sibley and Mary Barnes, were married just five months before Stephen's birth. His mother died when Stephen was only thirteen months old and his father four months later. They were both buried at Warminster, on 2 June and 1 October 1766 respectively. [4] There is no mention of their deaths in the *Salisbury Journal*, and it is not possible to know why they died so young. It seems that Stephen's uncle, Edward Sibley, a successful grocer and draper at Salisbury, became his guardian. Edward and his wife Elizabeth had no children of their own and it would have been a natural thing for them to look after the young child, and since he probably soon showed musical talent, for him to be placed at the Salisbury Cathedral School. According to the official records, he became a chorister on Friday, 24 June 1774, at the age of nine:

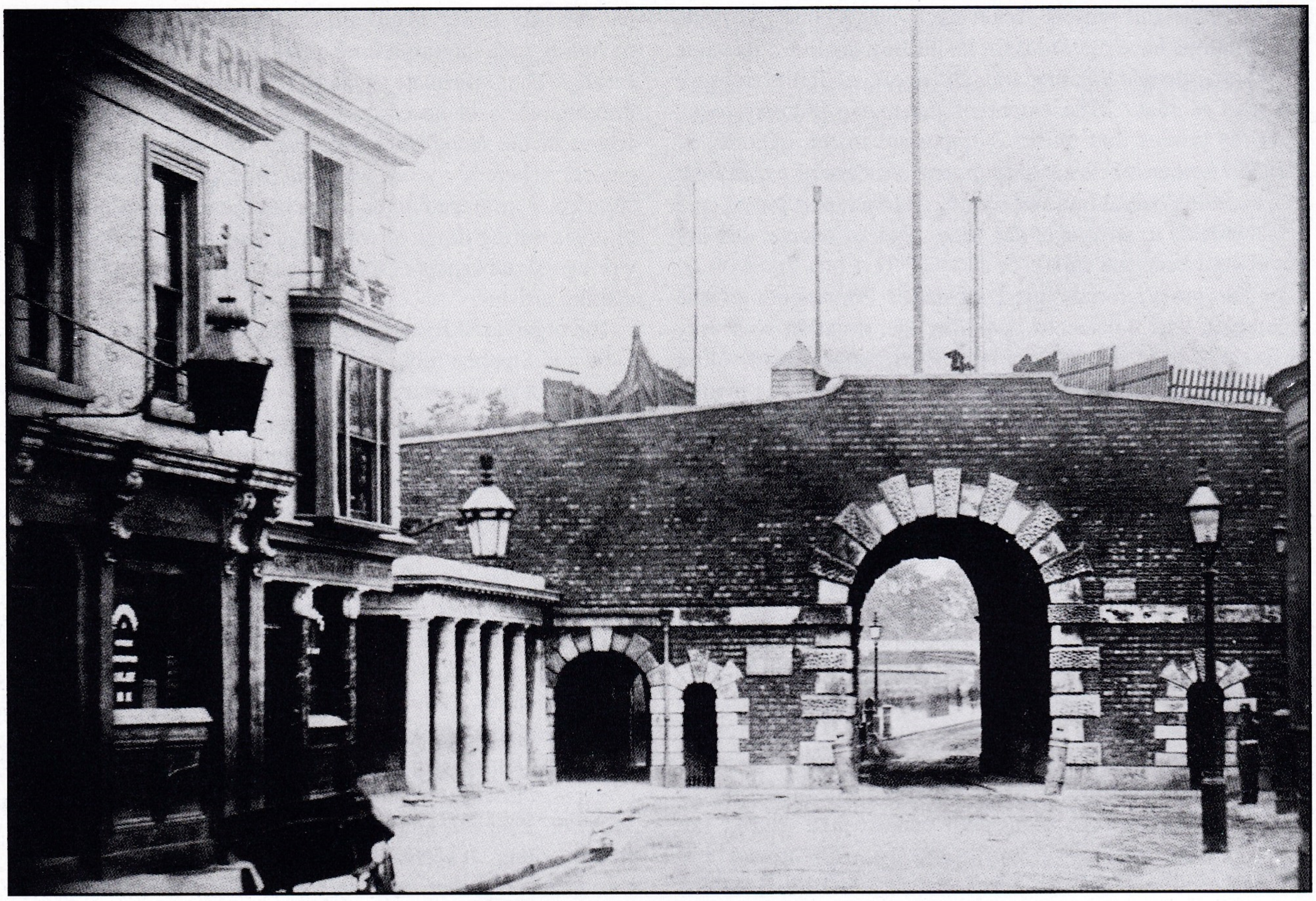
> ... At this Chapter John Waterland and Stephen Sibley were respectively chosen Choristers in the room of William Amor and Thomas Wheeler.[5]

In 1779, when Stephen was fourteen, his name appears among the 'Principal Vocal Performers' in Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabaeus* during that summer's festival. The advertisement names 'Master Clarke and Master Sibley'. In the festival of the following year it is only Master Sibley's name that is mentioned as a young performer. [6]

When Stephen was sixteen, his uncle, Edward Sibley, consented to his being apprenticed to Robert Parry, the current cathedral organist at Salisbury. The entries in the Chapter Book record Stephen's move from chorister to trainee musician. [7]

> Saturday 30 June 1781 - Ordered that £20 be paid out of the Choristers Fund for Apprenticeing Stephen Sibley

The Lion Gate, Queen Street, Portsea, viewed from the inside, was close to Stephen Sibly's house. Constructed in 1778, the gate was dismantled a century later soon after this photograph was taken. In 1929 it was built into the base of the Dockyard semaphore tower.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service



late of the Choristers to Mr Parry the Organist.

And:

Monday 7 January 1782 - At this Chapter Stephen Boylor was chosen as Chorister in the Room of Sibley.

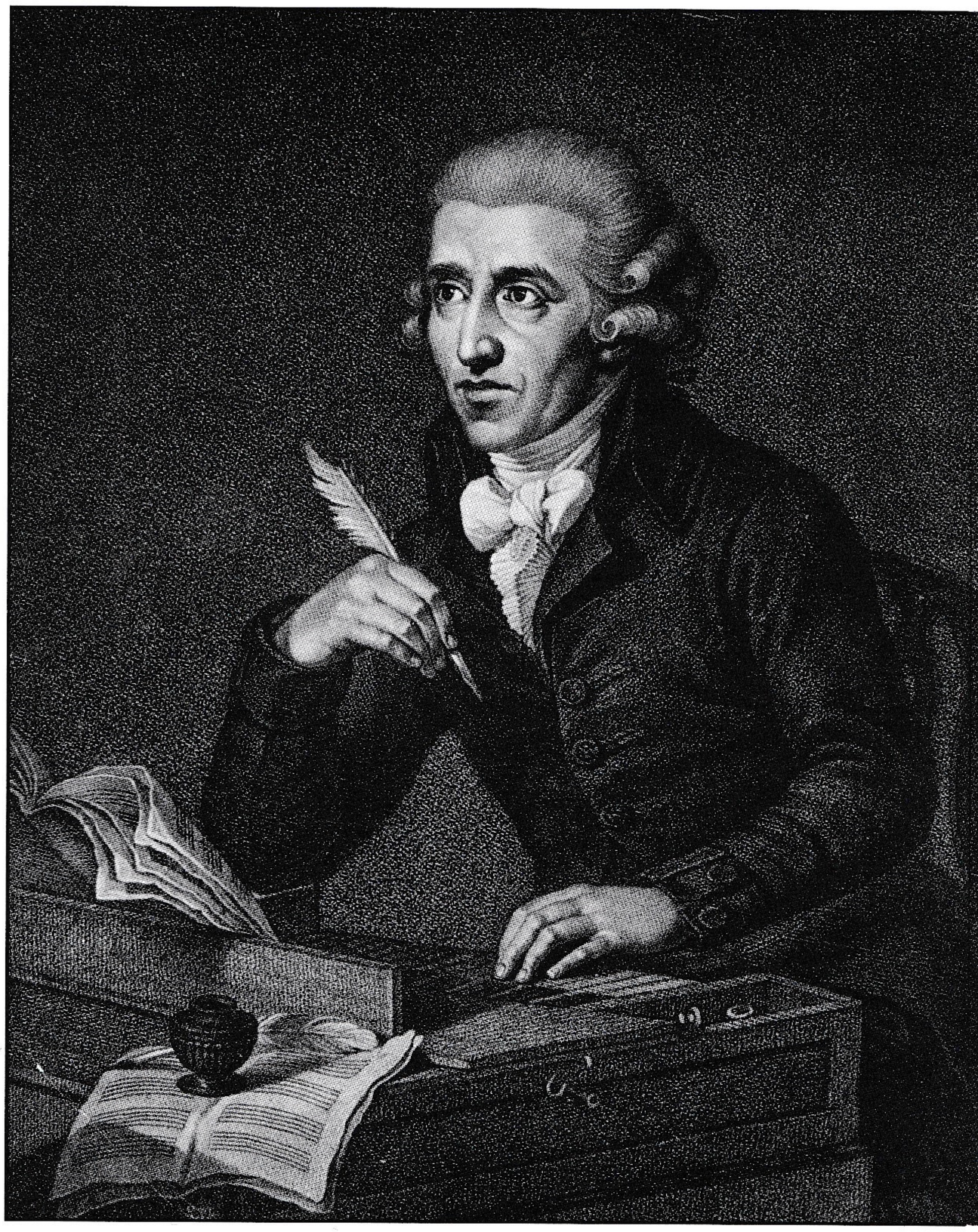
Still extant is Stephen's apprenticeship indenture, dated 3 July 1781, [8] in which the conditions of his contract are set out in full. Couched in age-old phraseology, it states that 'by the Consent and Approbation of Edward Sibley his uncle' for the 'Full end and Term of Five Years', Stephen promised to 'do no damage to' nor 'waste the goods of the said Master nor lend them unlawfully'. He would not 'commit fornication nor contract Matrimony within the said term ... play at Dice *[or]* Cards ... haunt Taverns or Playhouses nor absent himself from his said Master *['s]* Service day or Night unlawfully'. The indenture is signed by Robert Parry. There is no record of Stephen's activities during the five years of his apprenticeship but there is no doubt that in such a well-established environment he received the best tuition and had the opportunity to meet many of the most important artistes of the time, experiences that were to be invaluable to him in his musical work in Portsea Island. The thriving community to which he moved in 1789 must have fired his imagination. It was the beginning of a new chapter in his life, one which saw him change the spelling of his name from 'Sibley' to 'Sibly'.

By 1796, for which year the first rate book is available, he had acquired one of the largest houses in Queen Street, No.1, which, in July 1796, had a rateable value of £25 *per annum*, and also a stable in Clarke's yard (r.v. £3). [9] This implies that he lived well on his annual salary of £25, augmented probably by tuition fees from pupils. He had married Elizabeth Hodding of Salisbury at Upper Clatford, near Andover, on 15 December 1791, [10] and they lived in Queen Street continuously until Stephen died on 23 September 1842.

Stephen Sibly came to Portsmouth having had strong associations with Winchester as well as Salisbury. There is an advertisement in the *Hampshire Chronicle* informing its readers that a Mr Sibly would play at the Hampshire Music Meeting of 7-9 October 1789. [11] He had probably been invited to perform there before he took up his post at St John's. It is very likely that Stephen spent the three years after the completion of his apprenticeship in 1786 in the Winchester area although no positive proof of this has been found. It seems evident that musical activities in the two cathedral cities of Salisbury and Winchester set a pattern for the work Stephen Sibly was to do in Portsmouth.

During this period there were six halls in the south of Portsea Island which were suitable for public gatherings apart

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) composing, by Ludwig Guttenbrunn, c.1791.
Mansell/Time Inc./Katz Pictures Ltd.



from the four churches. This fact alone indicates that attending entertainments of various kinds was very popular among those who could afford it. Two of these venues were established playhouses: the Sadlers Wells in Spring Gardens (Guildhall Walk) and the Portsmouth and Portsea Theatre (the name of which changed from time to time) in the High Street, which stood on the site of the present Grammar School. Also in the High Street was the *Crown Inn* which, until its demise early in the nineteenth century, was widely used for concerts and balls. The construction in 1751 of the Portsea Concert Room in St George's Square next to the church implies that the frequency of local musical events warranted such an enterprise. Towards the end of the century the Beneficial Society's Hall in Old Rope Walk (1785) and the Green Row Rooms (1793) were built. Most miscellaneous concerts in the early years of the nineteenth century were held at the High Street theatre or at the *Crown* Assembly Rooms. [12]

The concerts performed at these venues were, in general, held seasonally from October to April. Additional annual concerts were often 'benefit' concerts and were normally held at the end of each season in favour of an individual, the leader of an orchestra, for example. The three concerts traced between 1789 and 1801 were all benefit concerts. The first of these was held at the *Crown* on 14 April 1794, the year Haydn visited Portsmouth. It was advertised in the *Hampshire Chronicle* as an 'Annual Concert' and it indicated that it was for 'S. Sibly'. [13] It is the first report found of a concert in which he took part in Portsmouth although the inference is that there had been others.

This concert consisted of two works by Handel; the overture to *Esther* and his setting of the 132nd psalm - *Lord Remember David.* Stephen Sibly himself played a piano concerto by Koseluch, and a sinfonia by Pleyel closed the first half. The second half was dedicated to Haydn. A 'grand sinfonia' is listed as in so many other concerts but in the preview of programmes the exact title of the composition is seldom named. A violin concerto was performed by Mr Mountain, the leader of the orchestra, and Mrs Mountain sang two songs. [14] Tickets on this occasion were 4s. each and were available at Mr Mottley's stationery shop in Portsmouth and at Mr Whitewood's and Mr Sibly's in Portsea. The door of the *Crown Inn* was to be opened at six and the concert to begin 'at seven precisely'. It says a great deal about Stephen Sibly as a musician that he was a very competent pianist and violinist as well as organist and leader, [15] and was able to perform with such well-established and competent British artists as the Mountains. In a report on a later concert his 'execution' of a piano sonata was described as having 'all that style of vivacity, expression and scientific excellence, which have ranked him among the first of our instrumental performers'. [16]

This interest in Haydn may well have been brought about by the Austrian composer's visit to England that year although he had made a previous visit in 1791-2. The famous impresario violinist, Johann Salomon (1745-1815), who was at this time a concert manager in London was responsible for bringing Haydn to England (where incidentally he composed some of his best symphonies and his oratorio, *The Creation).* Although Haydn was in London at the time of the above mentioned concert it is not likely that he attended. He was a conductor, and played the violin and pianoforte. He gave a Benefit Concert at Hanover Square Rooms, London, on 17 May, where the same versatile Mr Mountain who played in the Portsmouth concert, performed on the oboe. The beneficiary was a Miss Parke and Haydn 'presided at the PIANOFORTE'. [17] However, Haydn, deciding that he needed a holiday, went to Portsmouth in June of that year. It was a time of war with France and the dockyard was alive with activity. The newspapers told graphic stories of ruined French ships being towed into the harbour and how the king and his party had visited the ships to see both the dead and the wounded. Haydn said that he would have liked to witness this for himself and wrote in his journal: 'But I could not go there (*i.e.* the dockyard), because I am a foreigner'. [18] As will be

seen, Haydn's works were very popular among concert-goers at this time and at least one of his 'grand symphonies' was performed at almost every Portsmouth concert, although very few are mentioned by name or number.

The *Hampshire Telegraph* [19] was established in 1799 by Mr J.C. Mottley, and from then on a clearer picture of musical activities in Portsmouth emerges. It is apparent that there was a clientele for books and sheet music in the town. Mr Mottley, printer and stationer, was also a keen retailer and apart from his medicines and elixirs (which were advertised regularly), he publicized a new book that was to appear on 1 January 1800, *A General Treatise on Music* ... written on a new plan by M.P. King. [20] Two weeks later he was offering new music by Massinghi and Reeve, the *Comic Opera of Ramah Droog* in piano score, 'songs sold singly', and sonatas for pianoforte, violin, flute and violoncello. [21]

A Benefit Concert for Stephen Sibly was advertised for the 19 February 1799, to be held in the Assembly Room, Portsmouth. It stated that details would be given 'in the next paper'. However, that particular edition of the *Portsmouth Gazette* cannot be traced, but both the prior detailed advertisements and a report of the third concert are available. The *Hampshire Telegraph* announced: [22]

Mr SIBLY'S CONCERT

Mr Sibly respectfully informs his friends and the Public, his Concert is fixed for Tuesday, the 15th April *[1800]*, to be held at the ASSEMBLY ROOM, PORTSMOUTH. Principal Vocal performers, Mrs T. Collins and Mrs Kelly; and Mr Hill from Winchester; Leader of the Band, Mr Sibly ... Principal Clarionet, Mr Kirchner.

The programme was as follows:

PART I

Grand Symphony	Haydn
Song, Mr Hill, *Gentle Airs*, accompanied on the Violoncello by Mr Inchbald	Handel
Concerto Violin, Master Cudmore	Jarnovichi
Song, Mrs T. Collins, *Happy were the Days*	Massinghi
Symphony	Gyrowetz

PART II

Grand Symphony	Pleyel
Song, Mrs Kelly, *Poor Ora come from distant Shore*	Massinghi
Sonata, Piano-forte, Mr Sibly	*[Composer's name not given]*
Song, Mrs T. Collins, *Tergi O Cara*	Bianchi
Concerto, Clarinet, Mr Kirchner	Kirchner
Song, Mr Hill, *The Shipwreck,* accompanied on the piano-forte by Mr Sibly	Piercey
Finale	

Principal Vocal Performers, Mrs T. Collins, Mrs Kelly and Mr Hill. Principal instrumentalists, Messrs Kirchner, Inchbald, Hill, T. Collins, Gear, Target, Cudmore, Thomas, Warren, French, Simmons, Rilling, T. Guy, R. Guy, Larkin, Stewart, Quinton, Gethin, Lovell, Collins and Martin; assisted by the Worcester, Somerset, North Devon and Marine bands. Leader of the band, Mr Sibly.

Tickets 4s. each to be had at Mr Mottley's Stationer Portsmouth, and at Mr Sibly's, No.l Queen-Street, Portsea. To begin precisely at half past seven o'clock.

This programme is a particularly lengthy one by today's standards but it seems typical of those advertised throughout Stephen Sibly's life in Portsmouth. It says much for the stamina both of performers and audience. The long list of instrumentalists implies that a strong and lively sound was achieved and that Stephen Sibly's standing among the musicians he was able to assemble was high. The concert was also very well supported and an interesting announcement in the *Hampshire Telegraph* prior to the concert said: 'Lord and Lady Hood mean to attend'. Surely, an incentive for the status-conscious public to attend also!

The report of the concert was very complimentary:

MR SIBLY'S ANNUAL CONCERT - was performed on Tuesday last at the *Crown Inn*. It was attended by a numerous assembly of the most distinguished characters in the town and vicinity. The music, both Vocal and Instrumental, was executed in a style deserving of the plaudits it received. Mr Sibly led the band with uncommon taste, spirit and propriety. And the songs were sung with great effect. We could not but particularly admire the energy and effective style of the Overture commencing the second act, and Mr S. deserves considerable praise for his happy selection of the music and his sparing no expence *(sic)* to provide performers adequate to the execution. [23]

Praise indeed! Stephen Sibly had been in Portsmouth for ten years. He was in his prime, energetic and confident, capable of inviting excellent artistes to perform at his concerts and drawing crowds to listen to the performances. It was surprising that he did not spread his wings and travel to perform over a wider area. Judging by his receptions in Portsmouth, he would have been well received. But Stephen seemed content to develop his musicianship and his ideas here.

His musical commitments in Portsmouth were considerable. In 1806 he was appointed organist at St Thomas's (at his third application) to follow John Webb and his son, who had held this prime post since 1797 and 1799 respectively. [24] This post brought him another £40 *per annum,* a welcome addition to his salary as organist of St John's. He also had a

The Dockyard gate and The Navy Tavern seen from the Common Hard in 1833. Queen Street runs alongside the Dockyard wall.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service

young family. Six children, two sons and four daughters, were born to Stephen and Elizabeth between 1792 and 1809, probably all at 1 Queen Street, Portsea. The eldest was Edward Thomas, born in 1792, who became an accomplished violinist at an early age. His career became somewhat entwined with his father's and he walked in his father's shadow all his life, but he was the only one of Stephen Sibly's offspring to show any musical ability. Although four of his children were to die before they reached the age of thirty, [25] Stephen's enthusiasm for promoting music apparently remained undiminished during a very sad and difficult period of his life.

In December 1800 [26] it was announced that 'His friends have suggested to Mr Sibly their wish to have some Subscription Concerts during the winter'. The intention was to have four concerts at monthly intervals from December, with the subscription fixed at one guinea and non-subscribers' tickets at 4s. each. As a result, a year later, a series of six Subscription Concerts was presented at the Concert Room in St George's Square, Portsea. The first took place on 20 October 1801 and, thereafter, one each month until March. The subscription was £1 4s.0d. with non-subscribers paying 4s. per concert. The season was concluded with a Benefit Concert for Stephen Sibly on 20 April. All seven concerts were advertised in detail and, with the exception of the third and seventh, were also reported in the local press.[27]

The programmes were very similar to that detailed above (p.4) and all were reported enthusiastically. Of the first it was said: 'The commencement of these concerts being so auspicious promises that those which are to succeed will be among the first of our Winter Amusements', and of the fourth: 'the great additions Mr Sibly has to his Band, render his Concertos from Handel and Corelli, as grand and impressive as any we have ever heard outside London'.

It is interesting to note that most of the composers whose works were performed at the concerts throughout this period were alive at least at some point from 1789 -1842. Many of them are English although very few are well known today. The situation in the twentieth century has been exactly the opposite. Italian music was also very popular but above all it

A street musician c.1800, from Thomas Rowlandson's 'Portsmouth Point'.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service

was Handel, who came to live in Britain, who has always been a favourite with the British. It is surprising that Mozart's name does not appear in the earliest programmes. However, on one occasion the song 'Porgi amor' from *Le Nozze de Figaro* was advertised but attributed to Rossini - a printing error perhaps! [28] Most of the continental names on the programmes went on concert tours in Britain and therefore had made themselves known to the British public. The most obscure works which appear on the programmes were often composed by the performers themselves *(e.g.* Kirchener, who played his Clarionet Concertante in Portsmouth on 24 April 1794, Bianchi, Boscha, Bosisio, Jarnovichi, Piercey, to name but a few). It gave them a wonderful opportunity to air their talents. Contemporary music was much appreciated in its context and there were many opportunities to see and hear the great musicians of the day.

The groups of musicians who played at these concerts were chosen from local amateurs who met regularly for practice and were referred to as a 'band'. It is not until 1815 that the word 'orchestra' has been found to describe them. The basic amateur ensemble would be augmented for the type of concert mentioned above, depending on the demands of the music performed, and it is apparent from the advertisements and reports of these concerts that players from surrounding areas and from regimental bands who happened to be in Portsmouth at the time were invited to take part, as were members of the theatre orchestra. We can only wonder at the sound produced by such combinations. It would be in many ways different from that which we know today, as many instruments have been developed and improved since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Stephen Sibly would, on most occasions, be the leader of the orchestra but he took a more prominent part in most of his concerts as a pianist, playing sonatas and concertos, and as a violinist, performing solo concertos and duets with the celebrated string player, Joseph Reinagle,[29] for example. In several of the concert reports [30] there are indications that Sibly played piano sonatas which were very much liked by the audience. Most of these are not attributed to a composer and it is possible that these compositions were by Sibly himself. It would have been a humble act to omit the information from the advertised programme.

It would be difficult not to mention Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson while discussing events in Portsmouth at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He had set sail on HMS *Victory* on 14 September 1805 for what was to be his last encounter with the combined French and Spanish fleets. [31] After the Battle of Trafalgar, a great storm raged for four days in the Atlantic, and it was not until the night of 5 November that the news of Nelson's death and of the success of the British navy reached Whitehall. The *Hampshire Telegraph* reported the news on 11 November [32] and on 5 December, the battered *Victory* bearing Nelson's body anchored at Spithead. [33]

It was a time of great patriotism and events reflected the mood of the town and nation. Ironically, the first concert of the Subscription Season was held on 5 November at the Beneficial Hall. All six concerts presented suitable music from Handel's oratorios, *Samson* and *Judas Maccabaeus* for example. The second concert, held on 3 December, not only included 'His mighty arm with sudden blow dispersed and quelled the haughty foe' from Handel's *Jephtha*, and 'Peace to the souls of the Heroes', a glee by Callcott, but also an ode 'On the Victory of Trafalgar', the words and music of which had been written by the Revd H. Donne of Portsea. Sung by Mr Thomas with semi-chorus and full chorus together with an Elegy for four voices, 'O'er Nelson's Tomb', composed by a Mr Norris of whom nothing is known, these pieces had been rapidly written to commemorate the recent stirring events. [34]

There is abundant evidence in the local press that townsfolk in Portsmouth were always quick to embark upon charitable enterprises. As in other towns, special concerts and stage performances were often given either to provide funds for education or to alleviate hardship and suffering. The loss of life through battle, illness, severe injury or long absences abroad meant that many families became destitute. A 'Patriotic Fund' was established at Lloyd's to provide some relief to the poor and members of the Harmonic Society staged a concert advertised [35] as 'consisting of a selection from the immortal works of Handel', and would 'fix on compositions as would have an apt allusion to the present war and the

glorious naval victories over the French and Spanish fleets'. Stephen Sibly 'offered his gratuitous exertions in the musical department' and Mr Livesay produced paintings and transparencies to exhibit at the Portsmouth Theatre on 4 March 1806. [36]

When one takes into account the long association between Portsmouth and Lord Nelson, the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the Army, the publicity given to this concert, the fame of the soloist Sarah Dussek, and the high regard in which Stephen Sibly was then held, it is astonishing that neither the *Hampshire Telegraph* nor the *Hampshire Chronicle* contains a report, or even a reference, to the 'Patriotic Concert'. The wave of national pride and benevolence which prompted the concert was so pronounced that at least some reference would be expected in view of the support given to such a 'laudable project'. In a letter to Mr Frank Warren, Mr Carter of Lloyd's quoted the following extract from their records under the heading:

> Subscriptions and Donations to the Patriotic Fund at Lloyd's from December 5th 1805 to February 28th 1807, to the exclusive relief of the Seamen, Soldiers, Marines, and Volunteers, wounded and to the Widows, Orphans and Relatives of those killed, in His Majesty's Service, and in defence of this country in the war with France ... PORTSMOUTH: Produce of a concert under the direction and patronage of The Harmonic Society, per Mr William Deacon.....£30.0.0 .

With Box tickets at 5s., Pit tickets at 3s.6d. and Gallery seats at 2s., this does not seem to be a huge profit. It may be that the concert was not well attended, which may also be the reason why it was not reported, with the local press discreetly drawing a veil over the embarrassment of the parties concerned.

Another of Sibly's projects was put into action in the summer of 1805. Several other musical events held in the town have been hailed as the 'First Portsmouth Festival'. In fairness to Stephen Sibly this misconception should be corrected and it should be stated that the first Music Festival was promoted in Portsmouth in 1805, despite any claims to the contrary. It was a three-day event consisting of five concerts and took place on the 14, 15 and 16 August 1805 and was advertised as the 'Portsmouth and Portsea Grand Musical Festival'. [37] It was very similar in form to the festivals which were held in several other places in the south of England at that time, notably the 'Three Choirs Festival' (of Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford) and those that Stephen Sibly had already participated in at Salisbury and Winchester. The dearth of regular local newspapers from before 1799 means that it is difficult to say whether the tradition of holding music festivals in Portsmouth had been established before this time, but the report of the festival refers to 'this commencement of a periodical (perhaps triennial) Musical Festival'. [38] Therefore it is reasonable to assume that the '1805' was the first. [39]

Once again, Stephen Sibly was the force behind the organization of the event. He was the one with the professional contacts, the musical talent and the skill to present such a successful occasion. The concerts were advertised in the *Hampshire Telegraph* from June to August [40] and consisted of three Miscellaneous Evening Concerts held at the Portsmouth Theatre, a 'Grand Selection of Sacred Music' at St John's chapel at 11.00 a.m. on the 15 August and a complete performance of the *Messiah* on the morning of the 16th, also at St John's. The scale and quality of the performances are reported ecstatically in the *Hampshire Telegraph*. [41] Of the rendition of the *Messiah* it says:

> It was performed in a very fine manner. Each of the celebrated passages in the Oratorio might be quoted, for the very masterly style of its execution. The band consisted of 150 performers, and in the Choruses were the choirs of Salisbury, Winchester and Chichester Cathedrals. It is not easy to conceive the grandeur of the effect they produced.

The variety of the music performed in the so-called Miscellaneous Concerts can also be seen in the newspaper reports.

> Mr Lindley filled every breast with rapture by his Violoncello Concerto. Difficult passages *[were]* executed with a facility equalled only to the sweetness of the expression.

And:

> Clarinet Concertos by Mr Mahon, Bassoon Concertos by Mr Holmes, and Hautboy Concertos by Mr Greisbach, were respectively received with great applause. [42]

The vocal entertainment included in the evening concerts was not reported, but the *Hampshire Telegraph* advertised some details prior to the event. Part of the Thursday evening concert:

> will consist of Songs, Choruses, &c., from Purcell's *Music in the Tempest.* [43]

In addition:

> Mrs Second will sing the much admired song of 'Mad Bess'; also will be introduced a scene from the second act of Handel's Serenata of *Acis and Galatea* by Mrs Second, Mr Goss and Mr Bartleman. N.B. In the course of the evening will be sung some of the most favourite Glees. [44]

The organist at the Festival was Arthur Thomas Corfe who had succeeded his father as organist of Salisbury Cathedral in 1804. No doubt he officiated only at the morning performances at St John's chapel with Sibly leading the orchestra at both St John's and at the theatre. Nothing but

The interior of St John's chapel, which in 1835 served 7,000 souls. The organ which Stephen Sibly played from 1789 until 1835 can be seen through the archway.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service

praise was given to Stephen Sibly for the way he directed the Festival. [45]

> Mr Sibly led the band in a manner that did him great honour. Of the taste and feeling with which all the selections were made, and the masterly order with which the whole was conducted by that Gentleman we can not speak too highly. These towns and neighbourhoods feel, no doubt, that they have great obligation to him, for this commencement (and may we not venture to call it so?) of a periodical (perhaps triennial) Musical Festival, that, under his direction cannot fail to vie with any in the kingdom.

There is no indication whether the festival was a financial success or not, or whether Sibly received any patronage from wealthy supporters in the area. The financial commitment must have been something of a gamble, when one takes into account the fees of the leading professionals, the costs of the choirs, the hire of the chapel and the theatre, the provision of orchestral and vocal music, administrative and publicity costs, and commission for those who sold the tickets over a wide area.

In spite of the hopes of the newspaper's editor that a triennial festival be held, it was seven years before another 'Grand Musical Festival' was advertised in 1812. Much like the first, no expense was spared in its organization. The format was very similar to the 1805 event, having three miscellaneous evening concerts at the Portsmouth Theatre and two sacred morning performances at St John's. One can do no better than quote the report in the *Hampshire Telegrap*h the following day.

> Last night the Grand Musical Festival prepared by Mr Sibly closed at the Theatre. We shrink from any attempt to describe the powers of Madame Catalani The extent, richness and flexibility of her voice - and her taste, science and brilliance of execution, we confess, are far beyond our ability to convey an adequate conception of. Every part of her performance was so exquisitely fine, as to combine a constellation of vocal excellence - she both astonished and delighted her auditors, that it was found difficult to suppress an open expression of approbation, even in the chapel, at the performance of the sacred strains of the immortal Handel. At the Theatre, the rapturous plaudits that followed each song, strongly evinced the delight that was felt - Encore, encore - was constantly repeated, and it was an increase of the pleasure - to observe the obliging deportment with which she complied with the voice of the house. Mr BELLAMY and Mrs ASHE were the next candidates for public favour, in order of merit - and they gave universal satisfaction, and obtained a large share of public approbation. Mr VAUGHAN, Mr GOSS and Master KING (who seems a boy of uncommon talents) greatly contributed to the richness of the repast. The merits of LINDLEY, WEISCHIEL, SCHMIDT, GREISBACH, ASHE and HOLMES, who performed solo pieces on their respective instruments, are of that incomparable excellence, that, barely to mention their names will in a degree renew the sensations of those who have once heard them. Mr E. SIBLY, in a concerto on the violin, discovered very promising talents. The choruses were powerful and harmonious. We cannot close these few remarks without noticing the liberality, and indefatigable exertions of Mr Sibly, in getting up this most refined and elegant of all amusements, and, it is with pleasure that we state, that the general patronage, which such an undertaking called for, it obtained, and that the products,we hear, are likely to liberally reward him. The performances were attended by all the rank and fashion of this, and many of the neighbouring counties. The town had not been so full for many years.[46]

It seems from the comments in this report that Stephen Sibly had undertaken to organize this festival without financial patronage. It is very surprising that he made a profit from the event as the cost of such renowned artistes was high. No financial account has survived, but a report of a similar festival held in Salisbury in 1810 [47] says that the receipts for

Portsmouth Theatre, the High Street, 1803.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service

that event were £2,000 and that Madame Catalani had £400 for her three days' performances. Sibly's expenses at the Portsmouth festivals must have been considerable, and perhaps this is the reason that it was another twelve years before he organized another.

There have been times when music making in Portsmouth was not considered important enough to be reported in the newspapers. One such period was 1812-15 when the Napoleonic wars were raging in Europe and Britain was also at war with America. Then, news was frequently of battles and sunken ships, wounded men and defeated generals. There was no space to report even the patriotic concerts which raised funds for desperate families and wounded soldiers. There is little doubt that the patrons of music in Portsmouth would not have abandoned this pleasant way of making money to distribute to the many service casualties and their dependents. Wartime after all brought the people of the country together to fight for the same purpose. It was a time of prosperity and there was plenty of work to be had for men in industries relating to the Dockyard and the Navy while women were able to augment their monies by making clothes or working as household servants for the better off. Portsmouth people had more money to spend and musical entertainment would have been a welcome distraction from the graphic news that reached the port.

Advertising was resumed by the press on 8 March 1814, on the occasion of a Benefit Concert for Edward Sibly [48] when Haydn's *Surprise Symphony* was played, one of the few references to a specific symphony. From this time on, Edward shared the leadership both of concerts and the orchestra with his father. He was a violinist first and foremost (a soloist or leader) but he was referred to as an 'organist' when he went through the process of being admitted to the Phoenix Lodge of Freemasons in 1820. In the *Portsmouth Street Directory* for 1823-4 he is shown as 'Professor of Music' living at his parents' home at 1 Queen Street. He was a regular contributor to concerts, not only those organized by his father. From the early twenties the careers of father and son were linked, Edward substituting for Stephen when necessary.

By the early 1820s the population of Portsea Island had risen considerably, the growth being concentrated mainly outside the walls of Portsmouth itself (or Old Portsmouth as it is known today). [49] A new residential and shopping area

A poster for a Grand Concert with visiting instrumentalists in 1816.
Portsmouth Central Library (Madden Collection)

A Grand CONCERT

OF

Vocal & Instrumental Music

Will be performed

At the Beneficial Society's Hall,

OLD ROPE-WALK, PORTSEA;

On THURSDAY, March 7, 1816,

In which

Mr. BINGER

(From Amsterdam)

Will play Concertos on the Violin

AND

VIOLONCELLO;

AND

Mr. ZADO

Will play a CONCERTO on that difficult Instrument the FRENCH HORN.

PART I.

Overture.....HANDEL
Glee-----"*Disdainful of Danger,*".....HANDEL
Concerto on the Violoncello.....by Mr. BINGER
Song---Mrs. PURVIS, "*With Verdure clad,*" from 'The Creation'....HAYDN
Concerto on the French Horn.....by Mr. ZADO
Finale ..... BONTEMPO

PART II.

Grand Concerto.....CORELLI
Glee—'*On thee each living soul awaits,*' from 'The Creation,' .....HAYDN
Sonata..... Piano-Forte
Song---Mrs. PURVIS.....'*Angels ever bright and fair,*'.....HANDEL
Concerto on the Violin ..... by Mr. BINGER
Duett---'*The Lord is a Man of War,*' ....DITTO
Finale..... .....PLEYEL

Tickets, 4s. each, to be had of Mr. WHITEWOOD, 74, Queen-Street, Portsea; and of Mr. MILLS, 74, High-Street, Portsmouth.

To begin at Seven o'Clock.

Mills, Printer, Portsmouth.

A poster for a Benefit Concert of sacred music, 1829, in which both Stephen and Edward Sibly took a prominent part.
Portsmouth Central Library (Madden collection)

CHORAL SOCIETY.

On TUESDAY Evening next, November 17, 1829,

A CONCERT

OF SACRED MUSIC,

From the WORKS of HANDEL, HAYDN, LUTHER, &c. &c.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

Widow & Family

OF THE LATE MR. ISAAC STEARS,

Whose death was unfortunately occasioned by a fall in his Majesty's Dock Yard, on the 2nd inst.

Will be given at the BENEFICIAL SOCIETY'S HALL, Old Rope Walk, by the Members of the Choral Society, and several Gentlemen from the Choirs of Portsmouth, Portsea, and Gosport, assisted by the

Royal Marine and Royal Marine Artillery Bands,

Who have generously offered their services.

THE MESSRS. SIBLY

Have kindly offered their assistance on the occasion, and will lead the Performance.

SCHEME.

PART FIRST.

LEADER, MR. SIBLY.

OVERTURE. - ESTHER.

CHORUS. "We Praise thee," - } *Te Deum.*
CHORUS. "All the Earth,". - }
AIR. "In native worth," - - - *Creation.*
SOLO & CHORUS. "Lord in thee," - *Te Deum.*
AIR. "Now Heaven in fullest glory." - *Creation.*
CHORUS. "To thee Cherubin," - *Te Deum.*
QUARTETTO. "Lo started chiefs," - *Palestine.*
CHORUS. "In glory high," - - *Jeptha.*

PART SECOND.

LEADER, MR. E. SIBLY.

OVERTURE. - BERENICE.

QUARTETTO. "When the ear heard," } *Funeral Anth.*
CHORUS. "He delivered," - }
RECIT. "O worse than death indeed," } *Theodora.*
AIR. "Angels ever bright and fair," }
CHORUS. "But as for his people," *Israel in Egypt.*
QUARTETTO. "Their sound is gone out,"
CHORUS. "Give glory to his awful name," *Athalia.*
RECIT. "Behold I tell you a mystery," } *Messiah.*
AIR. "The Trumpet shall sound," }
VERSE & CHORUS. "Luther's Hymn.

Tickets, Front Seats, 3s; Back Seats, 2s; to be had of Mr. FISHER, Mr. GRIFFIN, Mr. HORSEY, Queen Street; Mr. YATMAN, Mr. T. E. BELL, St. James's Street; Mr. SIMMONDS, High Street, Portsmouth; Mr. LEAMY, Nile Street, Mr. READ, Perfumer, Little Charlotte Street, and Mr. PEAT, Charlotte Street, Halfway-Houses.

☞ DOORS to be opened at SIX o'Clock, and performance to commence precisely at SEVEN.

The Committee beg leave respectfully to acquaint their Friends, the Subscribers, and the Public, that their First Concert for the Season, which was to take place on Tuesday Evening Next, November 17th, 1829, is in consequence of the above Concert, Postponed till the following Tuesday Evening, November 24th, 1829.

[MOXON, PRINTER, PORTSEA.

named Landport was developing to the north of the ramparts (around Edinburgh Road, Commercial Road, Arundel Street, and Crasswell Street). To the east, another suburb, Southsea, was taking shape and shops were opening in and around Wish Street (now King's Road.) [50] Two more new churches were built in the rapidly expanding districts. St. Paul's was consecrated in 1822 and the contract for the building of All Saints' was placed by 1824. [51]

One would expect, therefore, that the festival staged by Sibly in 1824 would have been a greater success than the two preceding ones. Madame Catalani, regarded as one of the best singers in the world at that time, had been engaged again along with many other eminent performers. [52] The use of St Paul's was granted for the performance of the oratorio [53] in spite of the fact that an organ had not yet been installed there. Performances were advertised as early as April [54] and by June the Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport Regatta was planned to follow the Music Festival on the 27 and 28 of August. [55] It was also announced that Madame Catalani had presented a silver cup to be awarded to the winner of the last match of the second day. [56] This meant that there was intense social activity for the period of the festival involving the nobility and gentry from a wide area. To round off the week's proceedings a Regatta Ball was held at the Promenade Rooms, Southsea Beach, on Friday, 27 of August [57] under the patronage of Admiral Sir G. Martin (Commander-in-Chief) and Lady Martin.

Unlike the 1805 and the 1812 festivals, the 1824 event was held over two instead of three days and staged three rather than five performances. However, the programme was very similar. There was a selection of sacred music from Handel's *Messiah* and items by Haydn, Pergolesi, Gulielmi, Leo, 'and other great Masters' at St Paul's on the Wednesday morning (25 August) and there were two Miscellaneous Concerts at Portsmouth Theatre on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings (24 and 25 August). [58] As before, the local choirs of Gosport, Fareham, and Havant, and including the now 'celebrated Choral Society of Portsea', were joined by the young gentlemen of Salisbury and Chichester cathedrals, and the 'celebrated Female Singers of the Bath and Bristol Oratorios.'[59] Lists of instrumental players appear in the *Hampshire Telegraph* reports but are too long to be mentioned here. [60]

Further festivals were planned for 1827, one under the direction of Stephen and Edward Sibly to be held on 22 and 23 August at St Paul's church and the Portsmouth Theatre, the other organized by Thomas Bell on the 11 September, also at St Paul's church and in aid of the church's organ fund. [61] On this occasion they were compelled to announce 'to the Nobility, Gentry and the Public', that they had been unable 'to supply the place of Miss Stephens', the principal singer, and therefore 'had to POSTPONE the meeting till another year'. [62]

Thomas Bell's festival, one performance of sacred music by Handel, Mozart, Pergolesi, Kent, and others, took place as planned. The performers were different from those engaged for the Siblys' concerts, probably drawn from the local district. It is difficult to tell why the attendance was so low for this concert especially as the main musical event of the summer had been cancelled. The short report in the *Hampshire Telegraph* said:

> We regret that the Musical Festival at St Paul's Church, which, from the merit of the performance, was deserving extensive patronage, failed to effect the object intended by the promoters of it. [63]

Thomas Bell was an accomplished musician of many talents and it was he who gradually took over from Stephen Sibly when the latter's health started to deteriorate in the mid-thirties. His concerts are often advertised under the names of both himself and his daughter. His programmes also presented local musicians supplemented by talent from outside Hampshire. For example, in one of the subscription concerts of the 1837-8 season, [64] 'Miss F. Woodham and Mr J. Parry from the Philharmonic and Nobility's concerts, London' performed and the orchestra was 'complete in every department', led by E. Sibly and conducted by Thomas Bell himself. Bell, described as professor of music, was also the accompanist of the Portsea Choral Society under the baton of Carl Oxenham and piano accompanist of the Glee Club which met at the *White Hart* in Queen Street. [65] Oxenham was a violinist and played in the orchestra at numerous advertised events. He is first mentioned as principal second violin at a charity concert in February 1809 [66] and referred to in that year as 'a rising talent', therefore still a young man.

There seemed to be a rage for concerts over the next few years with new promoters. Some had already served their apprenticeship playing a part in music locally. Mr Guy put on a concert [67] featuring local singers Mrs Hill, Mr Cole and Mr Lacey with Mr Thorn playing de Beriot's 'last Grand Violin Concerto'. Mr Moore, [68] Mr Woolfe and Mr Leach [69] (Leach became lay preacher at Winchester Cathedral in April 1838), Mr Treakell [70] and Mr Coote [71] are only a few of the other organizers of concerts ranging from the 'Sacred' and 'Miscellaneous' to 'Light' music.

Such lively musical activity in any town necessitates suppliers of instruments and sheet music, and teachers to train those keen to put their musicianship to practical use. The advertisements found in the *Hampshire Telegraph* at this time indicate that there were many types of organs, pianos and harps available for sale. These were in common use in the home and it was a part of social accomplishment, particularly among young ladies, to be able to play the piano or harp and sing. It is no wonder, therefore, that a certain John William Bradock's business thrived.

Having worked for Stodart of Golden Square and Clementi of Cheapside in London, he returned to Portsmouth in 1820 to set up a business at 27 Old Rope Walk, now Kent Street,

'If music be the food of love....' (Shakespeare): 'The Rivals', a Rowlandson cartoon of 1807.
Portsmouth Museums and Records Service

buying and selling pianos and offering for sale a 'Horizontal Piano, with two pedals, made by Broadwood & Son'. [72] By 1822 he had moved first to 138 High Street, Portsmouth, and subsequently to no. 36 (formerly the coffee rooms of the *Crown Hotel*) and was offering various 'Patent Horizontal and Upright, Grand Cabinet, Cottage, Square Piano Fortes, several Double Action Harps, musical instruments of every description'. [73] He stocked Roman violin strings, harp strings and newly published music.

In 1824 he advertised a large selection of pianos at twenty-five *per cent* below the retail price, music at a third less than the stated price, 'old instruments taken or exchanged' and 'an elegant harp made by Mr Erard, Marlborough Street, quite new, colour black and gold, with double action for same at less than cost price'. [74] Soon after this Mr Braddock retired owing to ill health and it was announced that a Mrs Quicke would dispose of the business. [75] Other similar shops were run by Mr W. Ralf at 136 Queen Street and Thomas Bell at 42 Queen Street.

Miss Coleman, who confined herself to teaching young ladies, published her scale of charges on 17 July 1820 in the *Hampshire Telegraph.*

At the residence of her mother, 16 Hanover-street, Portsea 10s.6d. per quarter.
At the residence of her pupils:
In the towns of Portsmouth and Portsea, twice a week, an hour each lesson 15s.0d.
Without the gates of The Town £1.1s.0d.

Mrs Quicke, who is mentioned above, was also a teacher of music in Portsmouth at this time. She established an academy for teaching music and indicated that it would be 'assimilated' to the Royal Academy of Music, having an eminent professor attending from the London-based establishment. She was very active in Portsmouth and Gosport, and also performed locally. There is an interesting reference to her in the *Hampshire Telegraph* in January 1824 where she advertised a concert for her own benefit at the Green Row Rooms on 19 January, at which Robert Bochsa, the harpist, was to appear. In the next issue, however, Mrs Quicke stated that 'unavoidable circumstances' had compelled her to postpone the concert till the first week of February. (It took place on 3 February.) Before the concert occurred there was an intriguing letter published in the press:

Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840)
British Museum

PORTSMOUTH, January 24, 1824
MR SIBLY, having received an ANONYMOUS LETTER, stating that it has been currently reported that he has been, by false assertions endeavouring to injure a Mrs Quicke, in a Concert intended to be given by her in this Town, and also, that he had attempted to dissuade Mr Bochsa from coming to play for her; begs thus publickly to challenge the writer of the said Letter to avow himself and prove the assertions therein contained. And he hereby offers a REWARD OF TWENTY GUINEAS, to any Person who shall give such information, as shall lead to the conviction of the inventor of these false and illiberal reports.
STEPHEN SIBLY [76]

The outcome of this advertisement was not reported but the concert caused more unpleasantness between Mrs Quicke and Mr William Poole, the leader of the band which was engaged. He was asked to form a group to play at the ball which was to follow the concert but was chastised in a subsequent advertisement for 'pertinaciously' refusing to play at the ball. He in return claimed that this was incorrect because Mrs Quicke 'had omitted to arrange the affair to the general satisfaction of the company', and that he had been informed 'that no BALL was to take place'. In another letter in the same issue, Mrs Quicke 'laments that she is obliged again to obtrude herself on public justice' and refers to an apology which she had received from the offending musicians for refusing to play and that 'they would perform gratis when called upon at a future ball'. Such is the nature of people, that misunderstandings and jealousies caused quarrelling and upsets then, as they still do nearly two hundred years later.

During the winter of 1831-32 there was a cholera epidemic in Britain and although Portsmouth was not affected as badly as some other areas, 88 people died of the disease. [77] The *Hampshire Telegraph* seems to have been trying to quell any panic among its readers but it is obvious that people were not prepared to put themselves at risk by attending public functions. The paper reprimanded the '70,000 souls' of the area for not supporting a ball at the Green Row Rooms, saying that it was 'graced, or rather disgraced with an attendance of 40 persons'. [78] The second subscription concert, held on 12 February 1832, was nevertheless reported as being 'full to excess'. [79]

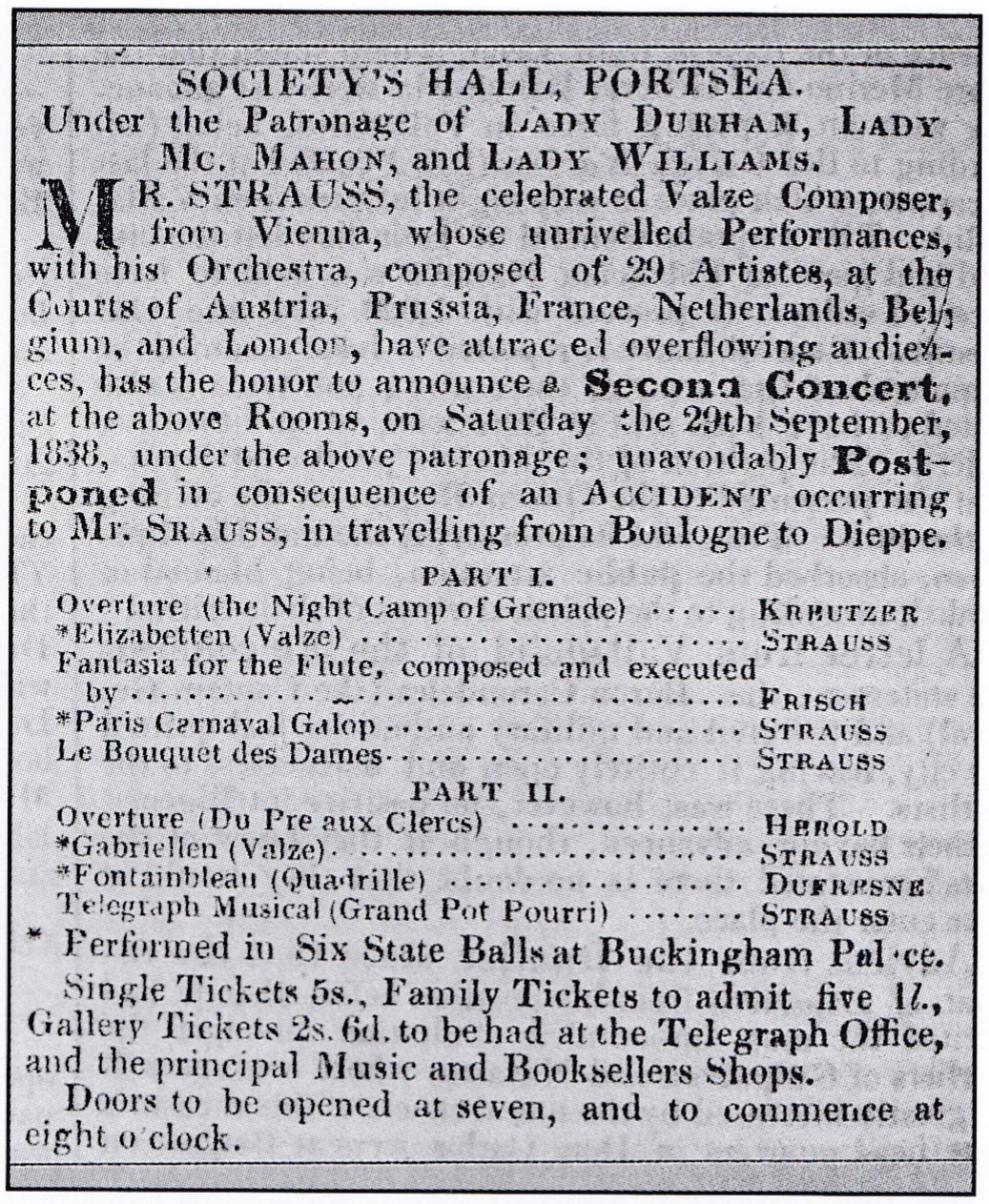
It has been mentioned already that Joseph Haydn visited the town in 1794. There is little information in the press about other visits by European artistes of any importance until 1832, when the renowned virtuoso violinist, Niccolo Paganini, came to Portsmouth at the end of a tour of Britain. In his native Italy he had participated in many aspects of music, establishing himself as a soloist, court musician, conductor of instrumental music and opera, and a performer in church orchestras and chamber groups It was not until he was 45 years old that he realised that there was a fortune to be made at his craft and he decided to tour abroad for the first time. His success was astonishing. Between 1828 and 1831 he conquered the music centres of Europe: Vienna, Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, Weimar, Nuremberg, Munich, Cologne and Paris. [80]

Paganini arrived in England full of confidence from his visits to other European countries on 14 May 1831, but his debut in London had to be postponed. He had insisted on normal ticket prices being doubled at all his tour concerts but there was an outcry in the London press when this was done at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, the venue for the first concert, which eventually took place on 3 June with the prices restored to normal. The reviews of the concert on 4 June were copied from *The Times* and reprinted in the *Hampshire Telegraph.* [81]

> He is not the finest player perhaps that has performed on that instrument, but he forms a class by himself, and produces effects which he has been the first to discover, and in which few, if any imitators will be able to follow him ... His violin ... seems to be part of himself ... If the instrument could be said to speak and feel, it does so in his hands. The delicacy and truth of his intonation are in all cases conspicuous ... The enthusiasm which his performances excited among the audience surpassed anything of the kind within the walls of the Theatre.

Such reports established Paganini's reputation in Britain and his tour was a very successful one. He returned to London in February 1832 and left for Paris in March, performing at Winchester, Southampton, Chichester and Portsmouth as he

An advertisement in the Hampshire Telegraph for a concert by the orchestra of Johann Strauss the elder, 1838.
Portsmouth Central Library



SOCIETY'S HALL, PORTSEA.

Under the Patronage of LADY DURHAM, LADY MC. MAHON, and LADY WILLIAMS.

MR. STRAUSS, the celebrated Valze Composer, from Vienna, whose unrivelled Performances, with his Orchestra, composed of 29 Artistes, at the Courts of Austria, Prussia, France, Netherlands, Belgium, and London, have attracted overflowing audiences, has the honor to announce a **Second Concert,** at the above Rooms, on Saturday the 29th September, 1838, under the above patronage; unavoidably **Postponed** in consequence of an ACCIDENT occurring to Mr. STRAUSS, in travelling from Boulogne to Dieppe.

PART I.

Overture (the Night Camp of Grenade) ..... KREUTZER
*Elizabetten (Valze) ..... STRAUSS
Fantasia for the Flute, composed and executed by ..... FRISCH
*Paris Carnaval Galop ..... STRAUSS
Le Bouquet des Dames ..... STRAUSS

PART II.

Overture (Du Pre aux Clercs) ..... HEROLD
*Gabriellen (Valze) ..... STRAUSS
*Fontainbleau (Quadrille) ..... DUFRESNE
Telegraph Musical (Grand Pot Pourri) ..... STRAUSS

* Performed in Six State Balls at Buckingham Palace.

Single Tickets 5s., Family Tickets to admit five 1*l*., Gallery Tickets 2s. 6d. to be had at the Telegraph Office, and the principal Music and Booksellers Shops.

Doors to be opened at seven, and to commence at eight o'clock.

made for the continent. The *Hampshire Telegraph* was the only paper to advertise the concerts given by Paganini in Portsmouth on the 10 and 11 September 1832, and although the programmes for concerts were usually declared in advance, it was not the case on this occasion. An announcement dated 8 September reads:

PAGANINI
GRAND CONCERTS AT PORTSMOUTH

Mr Wellman begs to inform the Nobility and Gentry of Portsmouth, Portsea, Gosport and their environs that he has entered into an agreement with SIGNOR PAGANINI, to perform at a MORNING CONCERT, at the Green Row Rooms, on Monday, September 10, to commence at two o'clock; also at an EVENING CONCERT at the Theatre on Tuesday, September 11, to commence at eight o'clock; on which occasions he will play some of his most esteemed compositions. Tickets to the Green Row Rooms, 7s. - To the Theatre Dress Boxes, 7s., Upper Boxes, 5s., Pit, 3s.6d.,Gallery, 2s. Tickets and Programmes of concerts to be obtained at Mr Lutman's Music-seller, 111 Queen Street, Portsea. Places for the Dress Boxes to be taken of Mr Bartelott, High Street, Portsmouth.

Mr Albert Cooper of Kingsworthy has an original programme which he has kindly allowed to be detailed below.

GREEN ROW ROOMS, PORTSMOUTH
PROGRAMME OF MR WELLMAN'S GRAND CONCERT
MONDAY MORNING, 10TH SEPTEMBER 1832
1° Parte

Sestetto Romberg
Song, Miss Wills - 'He went where they had left her' Purday
'Capriccio Sull' Aria - 'Stanco di Pascolar le Pecorello' followed by a Ron(d)o Brillianti - composed and to be performed by Signor Paganini
Song, Miss Wills - 'Bid me discourse' Bishop
Quatuor - Harp, Piano-forte, Flute and Violoncello Bochsa
The Celebrated Variations on the Aria 'Nel Cor Piu' - without Accompaniment - composed and to be performed by Signor Paganini.

2° Parte

Sestetto Rossini
Song, Miss Wills - 'The deep, deep Sea' Horn
Recitativo e Variazione Brilliante Sopra Tre Arie Italiani - Composed and to be performed on one String only (the 4th String), by Signor Paganini
Song, Miss Wills - 'The Rover's Bride' Lee
Trio - Piano-forte, Flute and Violoncello Mayseder
Nuovissima Sonata - In due Parte -
1. Larghetto Amoroso;
2. Finale Vivace - in Semiquavers, with perpetual Movement - Composed and to be performed by Signor Paganini.

Finale - God save the King.

Leader and Conductor - Mr P. Klitz.

Doors to be opened at half past One o'clock, and the Concert to commence at Two. Tickets, 7s. each, to be had at Mr Lutman's Music Saloon, No. 111 Queen Street, Portsea.

Samuel Horsey, Printer , Portsea.

This programme is very different from those quoted earlier and the variety must have been refreshing for Portsmouth audiences. Their reaction was one of 'astonishment and delight' according to the report of the concert in the local press [82] and Paganini had given 'an unrivalled performance'. Praise was given to Mr Wellman of Southampton for organizing the concert and gathering 'a respectable orchestra in a very short time' but the singer, Miss Wills, was regarded 'as yet deficient in many respects to render her a good singer'. However, the reports of both the 'Green Row Rooms' and the 'Theatre' concerts in the *Hampshire Chronicle* on the same day are much more enthusiastic about the performances:

> Paganini's Morning Concert, at the Green Row Rooms, on Monday, was exceedingly well attended, and the evening concert, at the Theatre, was crowded. He was

accompanied on the piano-forte by Signor Negri, and Miss Wills sang several songs, which were rapturously applauded. Mr Targett of Southampton, performed a duet on the flute assisted by Mr P. Klitz on the piano. Much praise is due to Mr Wellman, for his spirited exertions on procuring such a rich treat to the lovers of music. Paganini repeated two of his favourite pieces, which were rapturously encored, in the most condescending manner, and was greeted with long and incessant cheers. [83]

It is rather disappointing that newspaper reporting at this time confines itself to generalities rather than specific detail. Many of the organizers of musical activity in the Portsmouth area, such as Truss (Winchester and Southampton), Philip Klitz (Southampton), Stephen and Edward Sibly, Oxenham, Bell and Terry (Portsmouth) were violinists of some standing, and it would have been interesting to hear of their impressions of the great virtuoso's performances.

The coronation of Queen Victoria and the tide of celebratory events which followed it were fully described in the local press but no reports have been found of musical events in Portsmouth to observe the occasion as seems to have been the case in other towns. However, it so happened that Johann Strauss, the elder (1804-49), and his orchestra which travelled with him, had arrived in England in April 1838. For three months they gave concerts in London, including many appearances at royal balls, often performing for the young Queen Victoria. After visiting several northern towns and also Dublin during August, 'the wonderful Valtze composer, Strauss, and his still more extraordinary orchestra' played in Southampton, Brighton and Portsmouth. The concert at Portsmouth took place on 7 September 1838 at the Theatre Royal in the High Street. An advertisement for the concert has not been found and this may have been the reason for the fact that the attendance 'was not so numerous as we desired to see it', but that

> The execution of the music selected fully justified the widely spread fame of this unrivalled band, ... the precision and perfect harmony which distinguish this band, the numerous variations given on each theme of each dance, the curious and cheerful changes of sound produced by the introduction of little brass bells and many other novel instruments, rendered their music the most stirring and enlivening accompaniment that has ever been heard. [84]

The group left for France on 13 September, only to return on the 26 September, staying in Portsmouth from 29-30 September, [85] before making an extensive tour of England. A concert had been arranged at the Beneficial Hall, Portsmouth, on 17 September but it had to be postponed until the 29th because Strauss had had some sort of accident while travelling from Boulogne to Dieppe. [86] The concert was 'brilliantly attended' in spite of the postponement.

Strauss's new music became very popular and the sale of a variety of his compositions, 'as performed by the Queen's Band', was advertised at 1s.6d. each at A. Hinton's Music Warehouse, 54 High Street, Portsmouth. [87] While the local papers were reporting the fact that Strauss was dangerously ill in Vienna in 1839, Heinrich Schallehn (1815-93), who was a leader of the band which had travelled to England with Strauss in 1838, brought his own, 'select band' who performed at 'Her Majesty's Balls, Buckingham Palace, Almack's', [88] and toured the south coast. A concert of Viennese music at the Green Row Rooms, Portsmouth, on 9 September, 'called down rapturous applause'. It was further reported: 'The energy, life and spirit Herr Schallehn infuses into his band is indescribable. Strauss and Lanner's waltzes would certainly have set the audience dancing had seats not been in the way'. [89]

Liszt's success as a pianist owed much to Paganini. On hearing the violinist's performances, he aspired to make himself 'the Paganini of the Piano Forte' and composed his *Études d'Execution Transedentales d'après Paganini* (based on the *Caprices*) in 1834. Portsmouth audiences were lucky enough to hear Liszt in 1840. He travelled to England three times during the year, performing in London (May/June), the southern coastal towns (August/September) and the north of England, Scotland and Ireland (November) . [90]

Just as Salomon had arranged Haydn's visits, Louis Lavenu (1818-59), a French entrepreneur, cellist and composer of light music who became a publisher in Bond Street, organized a troupe with Liszt as its star attraction. The troupe consisted of Miss Steele and Miss Louisa Bassano, and the Welsh harpist and composer, John Orlando Parry. According to one authority, [91] the tour of the South opened in Chichester on 19 August 1840 'and then proceeded along the south coast through Brighton, Portsmouth, Exeter, Plymouth, and Exmouth, finishing at Bath'. However, there was an advertisement in the *Hampshire Telegraph* on 10 August announcing a forthcoming 'Grand Evening Concert' in Portsmouth at which Liszt was to perform his *Grand Galop Chromatique.* [92] There is no indication of the success or otherwise of the concert in the local press of the following weeks but this advertisement suggests that the tour of the South started in Portsmouth rather than in Chichester.

By 1817 many amateur groups were holding their own concerts too on a seasonal basis, and may have been doing so for many years before a report for 23 October when a 'Grand Oratorio of Sacred Music' was performed for the benefit of Mr Oxenham, the leader. [93] The choirs were normally made up of men, but on this occasion it was advertised that 'The performance will be aided by several young ladies'. Was this the first evidence of mixed-voiced choirs in the area? Another time:

> [*The Portsea Amateurs*] ended their season on 19 February

A poster advertising a concert by an orchestra led by Heinrich Schallehn, formerly leader of Strauss's orchestra, 1839.
Portsmouth Central Library (Madden Collection)

GREEN ROW ROOMS, PORTSMOUTH.

HERR

SCHALLEHN,

Late Leader of Mr. STRAUSS' BAND,

Conductor of the Orchestra at her Majesty's Balls, Buckingham Palace, Almacks, &c.

Having just arrived from the Continent with a select Band, has the honour to announce to the Nobility, Gentry, and Public, that he will give an

EVENING CONCERT A la strauss,

AT THE ABOVE ROOMS,

On MONDAY next, September 9, 1839,

TO COMMENCE AT HALF-PAST SEVEN O'CLOCK.

HERR SCHALLEHN has the honor to inform the Public, that he has prevailed on

MR. BARRET,

The **celebrated HAUTBOY PERFORMER,** from her Majesty's Theatre, to join his Band.

PART I.

OVERTURE	KALLIWODA.
WALTZ, Kosenden	LANNER.
VARIATIONS BRILLANTES OBOE, Mons. Barret	BARRET.
WALTZ, Somnambula	STRAUSS.
POT POURRI, Fra Diavolo	AUBER.
GALOP, New Branderburger	SCHALLEHN.

PART 2.

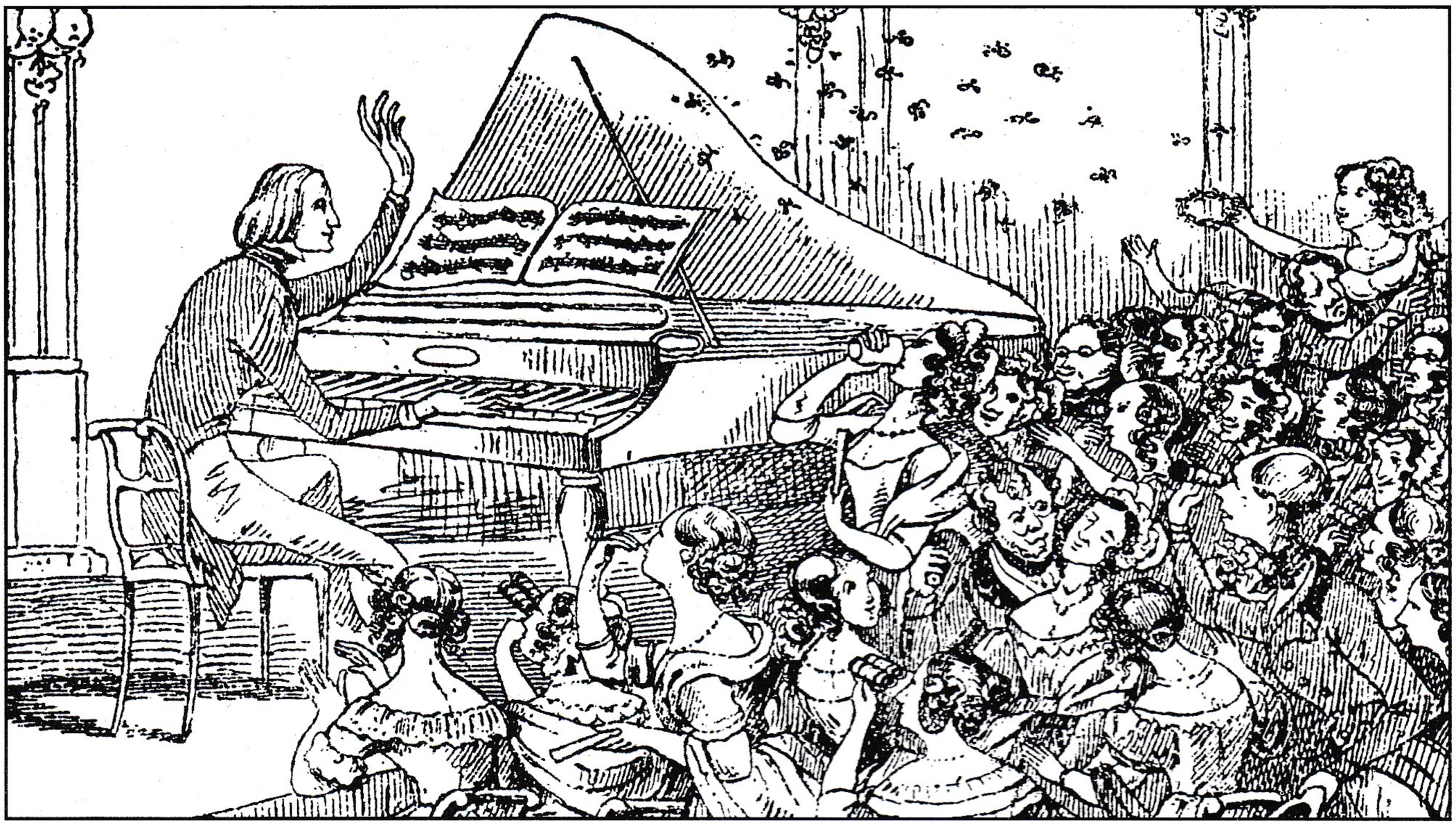
OVERTURE	ECKERSBERG.
QUADRILLE	BOSSISIO.
WALTZ, PETERSBURGER	LANNER.
GRAND DUET, for Violin and Clarinet, Zwerkampf, Hammers and Itien ..	HEROLD.
BALL, Racketen Walzer	STRAUSS.

☞ The above Works are published by R. Cocks and Co. London, and may be had of all Music Sellers.

Tickets of Admission, 4s. each; Family Tickets, to admit Four, 14s.—to be had of Messrs. Harrison, Miller, Davis, and Hinton, Portsmouth; of Messrs. Griffin, and Woodward, Portsea.—A limited number of Gallery Tickets 2s 6d. each.

W. HARRISON, PRINTER.

Franz Liszt (1811-86), a cartoon by Hoseman expressing how the virtuoso pianist's brilliant technique and flamboyance could engender in a fashionable audience all the hysteria frequently present at a modern 'pop' concert.



1818 with a 'Grand Concert of Sacred Music' at the Beneficial Hall under the leadership of Mr Oxenham and for the benefit of Mr Dipnall. [94]

Judging by the number and type of choruses in the programme the Portsea Amateurs were a strong choir or a combination of choirs. During the potato famine in Ireland these musicians staged a concert for the 'Benefit of the Distressed Irish' on 25 June 1822 under the direction of the Siblys. [95]

On 28 November 1823, at the Beneficial Hall, the Portsmouth and Portsea Choral Society, under the baton of Mr Oxenham, gave their 'first concert'. [96] The term 'first concert' probably referred to the first of that season. Whatever the mundane facts about the performers it is much more interesting to find a comment about the quality of their singing when Angelica Catalani, the famous soprano who performed in Portsmouth on several occasions, was quoted as saying that 'the Hampshire chorus singers were the best she knew in the kingdom'. [97] After 1823 it is clear that Portsmouth supported two choirs - the Portsmouth Amateur Musical Society and the Portsmouth and Portsea Oratorio Choral Society. Both choirs were very active during the following years and in 1831 it was reported that 'the Portsmouth and Portsea Oratorio Choral Society gave a concert for the benefit of their conductor, Mr T. E. Bell.' [98]

Not all the items in the concerts held in Portsmouth were of the kind we would refer to today as 'classical'. Symphonies, concertos and sonatas were interspersed with songs, some from the oratorios and lieder repertoire and others of a lighter style referred to as glees, elegies or ballads. The style of the singing is reflected in a Catch and Glee competition held on 28 May 1806 at the Beneficial Society Hall. [99] The rules of the competition indicated that the number of voices in each group was restricted to four, each group singing four glees, two elegies and a number of catches. The four-voice items had to consist of one counter-tenor, two tenors and a bass; the three-voice pieces having one voice to each part. The set pieces (referred to as 'nominated') on this occasion were:

Glee, four voices - 'Wanton Gales that Fondly Play' (Webbe).
Elegy - 'Fly to my Aid O Mighty Love' (Lindley).
Catch, four voices - 'I'll Back the Mealy Grey' (T. Arne).

Prizes of 10 guineas (1st), 5 guineas (2nd) and 3 guineas (3rd) were given. The winning group consisted of Messrs Thomas, Cheney, Kemp and Piddel. 'There were 200 people present and the decision of the judges received the sanction of the company' said the report in the *Hampshire Telegraph*. [100]

Such groups (also known as harmonic societies) did not need large halls in which to perform and there are many references to meetings, often accompanied by dinner, where the members entertained, *e.g.* at the *White Hart*,[101] the *Heart in Hand*,[102] or the *White Bear*.[103] Full-blown concerts were also presented regularly and the one held 14 February, 1838 is worth a mention. This was a 'GRAND VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL CONCERT, for the RELIEF of the Dis-

Part of a programme of an Amateur Concert of 1816 with both Stephen and Edward Sibly taking part.
Portsmouth Central Library.

LP780.7394227

AMATEUR

CONCERT,

New Rooms, Green-Row, Portsmouth,

MONDAY Evening, March 11, 1816.

PART I.

Overture, Saul.....HANDEL
Recitative and Polacca, Mrs. PURVIS, No. 1.
Concerto, Violin, Mr. SIBLY.....GEMINIANI
Glee, No. 2.....KNYVETT
Sinfonie.....GYROWETZ

PART II.

Grand Sinfonie.....HAYDN
Quartette.....PLEYEL
Glee, No. 3.....BAILDON
Song, Mrs. PURVIS, No. 4.
Finale.....MOZART

Mr. SIBLY will lead the 1st Act, and Mr. E. SIBLY the 2d

Mr. EDW. SIBLY respectfully informs the Subscribers, his Friends, and the Public in general, that his Concert is fixed for Tuesday, the 16th of April, the particulars of which will be given in due time.

Recitative and Polacca.—No. 1.

She's gone—a daughter's gone, to save
A banished Father from an early grave!

Song.

Hope her support, and Heav'n her guide,
No fears can turn her steps aside.
Nought can o'ercome her filial love.
Eager she rushes on, to move,
With lowly suit and bended knee,
The Royal Breast to clemency.
Around may gentle Zephyr's play,
To cheer the traveller on her way.
Oh! may every pitying power,
Befriend her, in that anxious hour,
When Alexina, on her knee,
Invokes the Royal Clemency.

Glee 3 voices—No. 2.

Bacchus, Jove's delightful boy,
Gen'rous God of wine and joy,
Still exhilarates my soul
With the rapture of the bowl.

Then with feather'd feet I bound,
Dancing in a festive round;
Then I feel the sparkling wine,
Transports delicate, divine.

Then the sprightly music warms,
Songs delight, and beauty charms;
Debonair and light and gay,
Thus I dance the hours away:

Glee, 3 voices.—No. 3.

Merrily merrily rang the bells
The bells of St. Michael's tow'r,
When Richard Penlake and Rebecca his wife
Arrived at the church door.
Merrily merrily rung the bells
The bells of St. Michael's tow'r

Richard Penlake was a cheerful man,
Cheerful and frank and free;
But he led a sad life
With Rebecca his wife,
For a terrible shrew was she.
Merrily, Merrily, &c. &c.

Richard Penlake a scolding would take,
'Till patience avail'd no longer;
Then Richard Penlake a crab stick would take,
And shew her that he was the stronger.
Merrily, Merrily, &c &c

Song—No. 4.

Now the dancing sun-beams play,
On the green and glassy sea,
Come, and I will lead the way,
Where the pearly treasures be,
Come with me, and we will go;
Where the rocks of coral grow.
Come behold what treasures lie,
Far below the rolling waves,
Riches, hid from human eye,
Dimly shine in oceans caves,
Ebbing tides bear no delay,
Stormy winds far away.

A poster advertising a Grand Opera at the Theatre Royal,1840, in which Michael William Balfe (1808-70), the celebrated Irish composer and singer, was one of the star performers. This substantial programme concluded with a popular farce.
Portsmouth Central Library (Madden Collection)

Theatre Royal, Portsmouth.

THE LAST NIGHT BUT ONE OF

MADAME BALFE,

Prima Donna, from the principal Theatres in Germany and Italy;

MR. FRAZER,

Principal Tenor Singer from the Theatres Royal, Drury Lane and Covent Garden;

MR. M. W. BALFE,

The Celebrated Composer and Singer from her Majesty's Theatre, and the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane;

AND MISS GEORGE.

On FRIDAY, the 26th of JUNE, 1840,

Will be performed, Balfe's celebrated Grand Opera, performed upwards of 100 successive nights at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, entitled THE

SIEGE OF ROCHELLE.

A GRAND OPERA, IN TWO ACTS.

Count de Rosenberg ... ... Mr. NORMAN
Marquis de Valmour,.....Mr. FRAZER,
In which character he will introduce Balfe's popular descriptive Ballad of
"THE YOUNG SOLDIER."

Montalban ... ... Mr. BUTLER | Azino (a Monk) ... ... Mr. SHALDERS
Michel (Servant to Count)....Mr. BALFE.
Corporal Schwartz ... ... Mr.W.SHALDERS | An Orderly ... ... Mr. JARVIS | Peasant ... ... Mr. DERMOTT
Clara.....Madame BALFE.
The Princess Euphema ... ... Mrs. WILKINS | Cynthia ... ... Miss SHALDERS
Marcella (Wife to Michel) Miss GEORGE.

IN THE COURSE OF THE OPERA THE FOLLOWING SONGS, &c.:—

ACT 1.

COMIC SCENA.—Michel..... "TRAVELLERS ALL OF EVERY STATION."
GRAND CHORUS ..... "VIVE LE ROI."
BALLAD.—Clara ..... "THEY TELL ME THOU'RT THE FAVOURED GUEST."
GRAND ARIA.—Valmour ..... "WHY LACKS MY SOUL."
DUET.—Marcella and Michel..... "WELL, IF I MUST SPEAK MY MIND."
DUET.—Clara and Valmour ..... "I AM ALONE AGAIN."
CONCERTED PIECE ..... "MY REASON WAKES AS FROM A DREAM."
QUARTETTE.—Clara, Marcella, Azino, Michel "LO! THE EARLY BEAM OF MORNING."

ACT 2.

SONG.—Marcella..... "ONE LITTLE KISS."
BALLAD.—Michel ..... "WHEN I BEHELD THE ANCHOR WEIGHED."
BALLAD.—Clara ..... "'TWAS IN THAT GARDEN BEAUTIFUL."
DUET.—Clara and Valmour ..... "WHEN THE REVELLER IS GONE."
DESCRIPTIVE BALLAD—Valmour, "THE YOUNG SOLDIER."
DUET.—Montalban and Michel ..... "ONCE A WOLF."
RONDO, FINALE.—Clara ..... "THE RAPTURE SWELLING."

The whole to conclude with the popular Farce, of

IS HE MY SON?

Doctor Scalpel (an old Surgeon, fond of experimental Philosophy) ... Mr. NORMAN
Capt. Lovemore (in love with Emily, a Ward of the Doctor's) Mr.BUTLER | Shadow (Servant to the Captain) MrW.SHALDERS
Emily ... Mrs. WILKINS | Trick (her Waiting Maid) ... Mrs. SHALDERS

TO COMMENCE AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.—SECOND ACCOUNT QUARTER PAST NINE.
The Box Plan may be seen at No. 51, St. Thomas-Street.

HARRISON, PRINTER, PORTSMOUTH.

tressed Poor'.[104] The report indicates that 'the audience, though not so numerous was of the first respectability'. However, as a result, '180 deserving poor individuals were on Friday morning *[i.e.16 February]* paid 1s.10d. each in money. We highly approve of the novel and effective plan adopted by the commitee for distributing the proceeds of the concert...without subjecting the object of their commiseration to a humiliating exposure of their names.'[105] Family concerts were popular and as the glee clubs were male institutions, the opportunity to entertain wives and children was welcomed, as well as being a means of ensuring a reasonable audience for the event. News of the clubs appears regularly in the press and even their practice nights were sometimes reported.

In 1835, Stephen Sibly resigned from the post which had brought him to the town in 1789 - that of organist at St John's. It might have been expected that his son would have stepped into his father's shoes automatically but this was not the case. Edward Sibly's vote went to his friend, Thomas Bell, who was appointed. By 1839 there are no reports of subscription concerts being held in the town and it is possible that Edward was not capable of carrying on his father's work. He had by now taken over as leader of the orchestra and did so at meetings of the Philharmonic Society (on three occasions in January and two in February).[106] He also played a violin solo at the last of the concerts.[107] The chapel of St Mary (designed by Thomas Owen) in St Mary's St (now Highbury St) was consecrated on 1 August 1839, and it seems that Edward composed the St Margaret's psalm which was sung at the service, and he also led the orchestra. A concert arranged to procure funds for an organ for the church was not a great success, but a donation was received from New College, Oxford, the organ being installed and inaugurated on 31 December that year.[108]

Stephen Sibly's place as organist at St Thomas's was not filled as amicably as it had been at St John's a few years earlier. There was inevitable friction from time to time during Stephen's career in Portsmouth, but none was as bitter as the rumpus which erupted when it was obvious that he could not continue to play the organ at St Thomas's. There are two different accounts of the 'organ row' which was caused by the inability of Stephen Sibly to perform his duties as organist of St Thomas's church in 1840. By this time Stephen was nearly blind and in failing health. It had been expected that his son, Edward, who had been performing at his father's side since he was nine years old, and deputised for him both as concert leader/conductor and as organist as the old man became increasingly infirm, would succeed him as organist. The powers that be, however, were not of that mind.

The first account of the episode is in the vestry minutes and headed 'Portsmouth Church October 16th 1841' and is signed by two churchwardens, John Miller (Jnr) and William John Hay. The vicar at the time was the Revd J.P.McGhie. The official account follows a few blank pages later, which implies that it was written at a later date. It reads:

> The Churchwardens having called upon Mr Sibly... to nominate another deputy than his son, in consequence of his general negligence, inattention and carelessness in the performance of his duty, and Mr Sibly refusing to do so, a meeting was convened...for the purpose of taking the subject into consideration. The Revd J.P. McGhie, Vicar having taken the Chair, it was proposed, seconded and carried: That Mr Sibly being unable from bodily infirmity to perform in person the duties of the situation as Organist to the parish, in consideration of his long and faithful services, an assistant Organist be appointed to officiate for him. It was then moved and seconded: That Mr Edward Sibly be continued for six months as the Deputy Organist. This motion gave rise to a scene of so much uproar and confusion that the Vicar declared the meeting to be Dissolved and left the Chair.[109]

A different interpretation of the events is given in two accounts found in a volume of assorted newspaper cuttings relating to St Thomas's church. [110] They seem to be accounts of eyewitnesses at the Vestry meeting who were in favour of Edward's appointment.

> In the year 1840 Edward Sibley Snr *[clearly an error for Stephen Sibly],* the organist of the parish church, Portsmouth, being nearly blind, had his place ably filled by his son Edward Sibley Junr. The Vicar, the Revd J.P.McGhee *[sic]*, taking a dislike to Sibley Junr, prevailed on the Churchwardens to appoint another deputy, and to call on Sibley, Senr to resign, knowing that this would almost reduce the old man to beggary. Sibley, legally advised, refused; he said that 'He had not received his appointment from the Vicar and Wardens' but the Parishioners and they alone had a right to interfere with him', and challenged the Vicar to call a vestry. In the meantime, Sibley Junr was refused admission to the organ loft, and the Vestry Meeting that followed led to a scene in St Thomas's Church which was afterwards referred to as the 'Organ Row'. This caricature [111] represents the Organ in St Thomas's Church, Portsmouth, padlocked, and the Vicar in his gown and bands, with spurs to his boots, leading a scratch choir of red-headed boys from the Green Row Charity School. Churchwarden Miller is grinding music on a hand organ, and little Hay, the other Churchwarden, kneeling on a truss of the same named material, blowing the wind into it with a pair of bellows. The man at the door, with the stick, is there to prevent Sibley Junr from playing the organ, but has no power to prevent him, as a parishoner, from coming into the Church; in proof of this he is putting his thumb to his nose at the Vicar.

Part of the second account throws some light on the original

cause of the row. As one might imagine, it was unlikely to have been Edward's inability as an organist or musician that was the cause of all the trouble.

> The Organ had been some time played by Edward Sibly for his father. Parson McGhie urged this man to marry a woman with whom he was supposed to cohabit, lest the church should be scandalized. He complied solely at the Parson's instigation, and commenced a life of reformation. But, no, this was not enough. McGhie, whose ear, I understand is as dull as a deal board, has taken a fancy that he is a great judge of music. Sibly has been obliged to lower the key of many of the tunes, to suit the cracked voices of a parcel of squalling boys, and this every musician knows will nine times out of ten entirely destroy their melody.

It is sad that such acrimony clouded the final years of Stephen Sibly's dedicated career but it is clear from a letter written by Edward Sibly on the day of his father's death, 23 September 1842, that Stephen was still in possession of the key of the organ. His successor, Henry Albert Lambeth, took up his post on 2 October, 1842.

> Portsea,
> 23rd September 1842
>
> Gentlemen,
>
> I beg to apprise you of the decease of my Father, late Organist of St Thomas' Church - at the same time I return the key of the Instrument which *the Parishioners* entrusted to his keeping at his election *by them* in the year 1806.
>
> I remain, Gentlemen,
> your obedient servant,
> (Signed) Edw' Sibly.
>
> Messrs Holmes and Binsteed,
> Churchwardens.

Maybe Stephen Sibly was defiant to the end but he had served Portsmouth well and been an inspiration to local musicians. He had filled the concert halls month after month by presenting excellent performers, organizing festivals and inviting singers of the stature of Madame Catalani, in spite of the fees she demanded, and thereby drawn audiences from a wide area. There is no doubt that he was responsible to a great degree for making musical life in Portsmouth as lively as that in any town outside London. He was an asset to the community and was well respected by its residents if the reports in the *Hampshire Telegraph* over the years are correct. Maybe he did too much over too long a period for there was no lengthy obituary to his honour in the local papers and his age was wrongly recorded. He was 77 years old when he died.

Portsmouth, Saturday 24 - Died on the 23rd instant at his residence, Queen Street, Portsea, aged 79, Mr Stephen Sibly, forty years organist of St John and St Thomas Churches, at Portsea and Portsmouth. [112]

He was put to rest with his father's family and his children in the churchyard of St Edmund's, Salisbury. His son, Edward, also died within the year at 50 years of age, and his obituary notice is more sympathetic than his father's:

> Died - in St Mary's Street, Portsmouth, on Thursday evening *[22 June]*, Mr Edward Sibly, Professor of Music, a gentleman whose talents are well known, and the loss of which will be much regretted. [113]

The fate of musical instruments, performers and concert organizers, however, depends, to a large extent, on the composers who write the music, and their success, in turn, depends on public taste. In a survey of two hundred composers whose works were performed in Portsmouth during the two periods 1789-1815 and 1816-1842, it is very interesting to realise that as each new 'great' composer is presented to the public a 'lesser' one is discarded and quality wins the day. The bar charts provided below are a reflection of the number of items by each composer which appear on concert programmes held in the Portsmouth area and which are available for scrutiny. The significance of Handel and Haydn in particular is not fully illustrated by the charts, as their works include whole oratorios or symphonies whereas Callcott's and Braham's contributions, for example, were comparatively short songs. Pleyel and Massinghi, whose works were so popular in the first half of the period, had no pieces at all performed after 1815, and Gyrowetz had only three. Mozart grew steadily in popularity as did Bishop, but Rossini seems to have exploded on to the music scene as soon as he started composing! Public commendation proved justified. At the end of the twentieth century, Handel is still high on the list of public favourites as are Haydn and Mozart, and Rossini can still draw full houses.

Principal Composers whose works were played at Portsmouth Concerts and number of compositions of each.

1789-1815

Handel, George Frederic (1685-1759) *German*	153
Haydn, Joseph (1732-1809) *Austrian*	54
Pleyel, Ignaz (1757-1831) *Austrian*	23
Massinghi, Joseph (1765-1844) *English*	16
Callcott, John Wall (1766-1821) *English*	16
Gyrowetz, Adalbert (1763-1850) *Bohemian*	15
Braham, John (1777-1856) *English*	11
Mozart,Wolfgang Amadeus (1756-1791) *Austrian*	9
Corelli, Arcangelo (1653-1713) *Italian*	7
Bishop, Henry Rowley (1786-1855) *English*	5

1816-1842

Handel, George Frederic (1685-1759) *German*	110
Rossini, Gioachino Antonio (1792-1868) *Italian*	73
Bishop, Henry Rowley (1786-1855) *English*	62
Mozart,Wolfgang Amadeus (1756-1791) *Austrian*	52
Haydn, Joseph (1732-1809) *Austrian*	40
Bellini, Vincenzo (1801-1835) *Italian*	26
Auber, Daniel (1782-1871) *French:* Boscha, Robert (1789-1856)	15
Callcott, John Wall (1766-1821) *English*	14
Balfe, Michael William (1808-1870) *Irish*	11
Braham, John (1777-1856) *English*	9

SIMPLIFIED SIBL(E)Y FAMILY TREE

Charles Sibley of Ebbesbourne Wake (*c*.1675-1705) = Joane Jeffery

Prudence Bracher of Semley (*c*.1701-74) = George, yeoman of Tollard Royal (*c*.1703-74)

Mary

Charles

George

Prudence

Catherine

Thomas

EDWARD grocer/draper of Salisbury (1734-92) = (1) Elizabeth (died 1777) (2) Mary

Anne

NORTON of Warminster (1739-66) = MARY BARNES (died 1766)

Elizabeth

ELIZABETH HODDING of Salisbury = STEPHEN SIBLY of Portsea and Portsmouth, musician (1765-1842)

EDWARD THOMAS SIBLY of Portsea and Portsmouth, musician (1792-1843) = Mary Cox of Ryde

Stephen (*c*.1794-97)

Elizabeth Anne (*c*.1796 - 1813)

Fanny Maria (1800-78)

Sophia Emma (1804-34) = Thomas Skelton secretary, Royal Naval College Portsmouth.

Louisa Mary (1807-33)

Elizabeth Campbell Skelton (1832-1922)

Sophia Emma Skelton (1834-95)

REFERENCES

1 For the local historical background see J. Webb, S. Quail, P. Haskell and R. Riley, *The Spirit of Portsmouth* (Chichester, 1989), especially chapters 2, 3, 6, 7.

2 Philip Barrett,'The Organs and Organists of the Cathedral Church of St Thomas of Canterbury at Portsmouth,' *Portsmouth Papers* 4 (Portsmouth, 1975 edn), pp. 7-8; Portsmouth City Records Office (hereafter PCRO), CHU5/2, p. 1.

3 J.D. Brown and S. Stratton, *British Musical Biography* (Birmingham, 1897).

4 *Salisbury Journal* (hereafter *SJ*), 11 July and 12 Oct. 1776.

5 Salisbury Cathedral Archives (hereafter SCA), Chapter Act Book, 1741-1796.

6 *SJ*, nos. 2145, 2148, 2149, 2150.

7 SCA, Chapter Act Book, 1741-1796.

8 SCA, Chapter Act Book, 1741-1796.

9 PCRO, 81A/3/2l/3.

10 W.J.C. Moens, ed., *Hampshire Allegations for Marriage Licences ... 1689-1837* (London, 1893), Vol. II, p. 204.

11 *Hampshire Chronicle* (hereafter *HC*), 5 Oct. 1789.

12 H. Sargeant, 'A History of Portsmouth Theatres', *Portsmouth Papers* 13 (Portsmouth, 1971); John Webb, 'An Early Victorian Street -The High Street, Old Portsmouth', *Ibid.* 26 (Portsmouth, 1977).

13 *HC*, 7 April 1794. The same advertisement appeared in *The Sun* on 9 April 1794.

14 Mrs Mountain, née Wilkinson (*c.*1768-1841) was a well known soprano at Covent Garden. She had married Joseph Mountain, an Irish violinist (dates unknown) in 1786. (Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (hereafter *NG*), London, 1980 edn.)

15 The leader of the orchestra was, at that time, the man who controlled the players,setting the time and 'conducting' where necessary with his bow. No one stood in front of the orchestra waving a baton.

16 *Hampshire Telegraph* (hereafter *HT*), 8 Dec. 1800.

17 Robbins Landon, *Haydn in London, 1791-95* (London, 1976), p. 263.

18 Gerald Norris, *A Musical Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland* (Newton Abbot, 1981), p. 256. In July 1833, Felix Mendelssohn and his father visited Portsmouth to see the dockyard and the *Victory (Ibid.* p.257).

19 Originally called *Portsmouth Telegraph*; or *Mottley's Naval and Military Journal* (first edition 14 Oct. 1799).

20 *HT*, 25 November 1799.

21 *Portsmouth Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 11 Dec. 1799.

22 *HT*, 7 and 14 April 1800.

23 *HT*, 21 April 1800.

24 Philip Barrett, *op. cit.*, p.18.

25 Stephen Sibly (*c.*1794-97); Elizabeth Anne Sibly (1796-1813); Sophia Sibly (1804-34); Louisa Mary Sibly (1807-33); Fanny Maria (1800-1878) was the only child of the Siblys' to live to an old age.

26 *HT*, 1 and 8 Dec. 1800.

27 *HT*, 12 and 26 Oct. 1801.

28 Mr Treakell's concert, 26 Feb. 1839. For the Treakell family of musicians see John Webb, *op. cit.*, p.16.

29 Joseph Reinagle, jnr (b. Portsmouth 1762, d. Oxford 1825), friend of Haydn and composer of *Dumfries Races*. His more celebrated brother Alexander (b. Portsmouth 1756) was a pianist, teacher and prolific composer. (*NG*)

30 *E.g. HT*, 16 June 1805.

31 Carola Oman, *Nelson*, 2nd ed. (London, 1950), pp. 526-8.

32 *HT*, 11 Nov. 1805.

33 Oman, *op. cit.*, pp. 562-3.

34 *HT*, 2 Dec. 1805.

35 *HT*, 2 Dec. 1805 and several further references over the next three months.

36 *HT*, 3 March 1806.

37 *HT*, 3 June 1805.

38 *HT*, 16 Sept. 1805.

39 Would it not be a fitting tribute to this hitherto little known musician from Portsmouth's past to stage a bicentennial festival in August 2005? The programmes found below could be followed!

40 *HT*, 3 June 1805, etc.

41 *HT*, 19 Aug. 1805.

42 *HT*, 19 Aug. 1805. 'Hautboy' was an earlier name for the oboe.

43 This refers to Henry Purcell's opera, composed *c.*1695 and based upon Thomas Shadwell's version of the adaptation of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* by Sir William Davenant and John Dryden. (*NG*).

44 *HT*, 19 Aug. 1805. 'Mr Goss' was probably Joseph Goss, organist of Fareham, whose son, Sir John Goss (1800-80), was appointed organist of St Paul's Cathedral in 1838 and composed sacred music, including an anthem for the Duke of Wellington's funeral. (*NG*).

45 *HT*, 19 Aug. 1805.

46 *HT*, 24 Aug. 1812.

47 *HT*, 16 July 1810.

48 *HT*, 8 March 1814.

49 Barry Stapleton, 'The Population of the Portsmouth Region' in *The Portsmouth Region*, eds B. Stapleton and J.H. Thomas (Gloucester, 1989), pp. 100-108.

50 Webb, Quail, Haskell and Riley, *op. cit.*, especially chapters 2 and 6.

51 W.G. Gates, *Illustrated History of Portsmouth* (Portsmouth, 1900), pp. 642-5.

52 *HT*, 19 April 1824.

53 *HT*, 14 June 1824.

54 *HT*, 19 April 1824.

55 *HT*, 28 June 1824.

56 *HT*, 19 July, 9 Aug., 16 Aug. (twice), 1824.

57 *HT*, 23 Aug. 1824.

58 *HT*, 30 Aug. and 13 Sept. 1824.

59 *HT*, 30 Aug. 1824. This, incidentally, is the first time that choirs of female singers have been mentioned in Portsmouth and it suggests that the choral balance would have created a sound similar to that of the present-day mixed choirs.

60 *HT*, 10 May, 7 June, 6 Sept., 13 Sept., 20 Sept. 1824.

61 *HT*, 10 Aug. 1827.

62 *HT*, 28 Aug. 1827.

63 *HT*, 17 Sept. 1827.

64 *HT*, 26 March 1838.

65 *HT*, 19 July 1824.

66 *HT*, 20 Feb. and 6 March 1809.

67 *HT*, 27 Aug. 1838.

68 *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 1 Oct. 1838.

69 *HT*, 19 Feb. 1838.

70 *HT*, 4 Feb. 1839.

71 *HT*, 26 Nov. 1838.

72 *HT*, 21 Feb. I820.

73 *HT*, 16 Dec. 1822.

74 *HT*, 12 and 19 July 1824.

75 *HT*, 26 July 1824.

76 *HT*, 26 Jan. 1824.

77 *HT*, 18 Oct. 1831; R. Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health ... 1850*, p. 21.

78 *HT*, 3 Jan. 1831.

79 *HT*, 16 March 1832.

80 John Sugden, *Niccolo Paganini* (Tunbridge Wells, 1980), p. 105.

81 *HT*, 6 June 1831.

82 *HT*, 17 Sept. 1832.

83 *HC*, 17 Sept. 1832.

84 *HT*, 10 Sept. 1838.

85 *HT*, 17 Sept. 1838.

86 Schonherr and Reinhol, *Das Jahrhundrert des Walzers* (Vienna, 1954).

87 *HT*, 24 Sept. 1838.

88 A fashionable assembly room in St James's Street, London, later referred to as Willis's Rooms.

89 *HT*, 16 Sept. 1839.

90 A. Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years*, 1811-1847 (London, 1983), vol. I, pp.353-63.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 359. Parry was later organist at St Jude's church, Southsea (Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 16).

92 *HT*, 10 Aug. 1840.

93 *HT*, 27 Oct. 1817.

94 *HT*, 23 Feb. 1818.

95 *HT*, 17 June 1822.

96 *HT*, 17 Oct. 1823.

97 *HT*, 24 Oct. 1823.

98 *HT*, 21 Mar. 1831.

99 *HT*, 28 April 1806.

100 *HT*, 2 June 1806.

101 *HT*, 3 April 1837.

102 *HT*, 22 May 1837.

103 *HT*, 26 June 1837.

104 *HT*, 12 Feb. 1838.

105 *HT*, 19 Feb. 1838.

106 *HT*, 25 Feb. 1839.

107 *HT*, 28 Oct. 1839.

108 *HT*, 30 Dec. 1839.

109 PCRO, CHU2/2A/4.

110 PCRO, CHU2/2c, pp. 63-4.

111 A copy of this is not included in the Vestry Minutes.

112 *HT*, 26 Sept. 1842.

113 *HT*, 24 June 1843.

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Frank Warren is a native of Portsmouth, and he and his wife Beatty have spent their lives in the city. He was educated at the Northern Secondary School for Boys, joined the Co-operative Society in 1925 and gained accountancy qualifications through their educational schemes. He has played an active part in amateur music making in Portsmouth as accompanist and duo-pianist, and ran the Co-op Music Club, to which he often gave talks on music. An enthusiastic photographer, he has presented slide shows at local clubs. Since his retirement in 1971 he has worked meticulously and with dedication on the history of music in Portsmouth and district, some of which is related in this Paper.

Irwen Cockman was born in Caernarvon, North Wales. She was educated at UCNW Bangor, where she gained degrees in Welsh and Music (B.A., B.Mus.). She has taught music in Middlesex, Kent, Clwyd and Hampshire. The family moved to Portsmouth in 1980 where her husband was a psychiatrist. She is currently completing a research project on a harpist who played at James I's court and her second novel (in Welsh) will be published this year. Irwen has been the conductor of the Portsea Island Co-operative Ladies' Choir for the last sixteen years.

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